

Women of Cuba.

LETTERS WRITTEN DURING

A

(TOUR)

THROUGH

NORMANDY, BRITANNY,

AND

OTHER PARTS OF FRANCE,

IN 1818:

INCLUDING LOCAL AND HISTORICAL DESCRIPTIONS;

WITH REMARKS ON THE

MANNERS AND CHARACTER OF THE PEOPLE.

BY MRS. CHARLES STOTHARD.

WITH NUMEROUS ENGRAVINGS,

AFTER DRAWINGS BY CHARLES STOTHARD, F.S.A.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Letters, which without any pretension but that of veracity are now laid before the public, had their origin in filial affection. They were addressed, without any view to publication, by the writer to her mother and family, during the first separation from them, for any length of time, that had occurred.

When it was suggested to the writer, by friends to whose judgment she has paid greater deference than to her own, that she should venture to give her Letters to the press, she conceived that she ought to omit all such parts as exclusively related to private or domestic affairs; though this suppression may have occasioned many abrupt and ill-connected sentences, the writer has preferred that the Letters should appear as nearly as possible in their original form, to supplying their deficiencies by matter made up in England, when the novelty and impressions of her excursion had in some measure worn off.

The only additions the work has received since her return, consist in the careful correction and adjustment of dates, &c. from which she was precluded during her journey, by the impossibility of reference to the necessary authorities.

A great portion of her tour embraces a district almost unnoticed by the literary traveller, although intimately connected with the annals of our national history, and replete with vestiges illustrative of our ancient chronicles. She regrets that no abler pen has undertaken the task of introducing the subject to the notice of her countrymen, while she trusts that her humble endeavours will not be found totally deficient in utility and amusement.

ANNA ELIZA STOTHARD

July 31. 1820

ERRATA

Page 20. line 8. for *benevolence*, read *general benevolence*
81. line 14. for *figurer*, read *figures*
86. line 10. for *his*, read *its*.
118. line 10. for *conducting*, read *conducted*
184. line 16. for *magazine*, read *magasin*.
256. line 18. for *remains*, read *remain*

LETTERS FROM FRANCE.

LETTER I.

My dear ——; Dieppe, July 11. 1818.

I am anxious to redeem the pledge I gave on parting from you in London, to transmit, from time to time, some account of our wanderings in France. The peculiar pursuits of Mr. S —— will afford me an opportunity of deviating from the ordinary and beaten track. I wish my ability to entertain you were commensurate with the interest excited by such objects as may present themselves to my view; but this I can scarcely hope: all my endeavours shall, therefore, be confined to the giving you a faithful unaffected picture of objects as I find them; divesting myself of any Gallic or Antigallic prejudices, of any desire to launch into hyperbolical description, or of soliciting your attention at the expense of truth. The present manners of the French nation will not be forgotten, while I endeavour, in our route through the Duchies of Normandy and Bretagne, to give you some account of such vestiges of antiquity as are illustrative of the ancient chronicles.

The description of the curious record of the Norman invasion, preserved at Bayeux, will perhaps afford you some interest;

more especially as it forms a principal object of Mr. S—'s journey to Normandy.

In the pursuit of any historical notices, you will pardon the scanty information I may possess.

I will supply you with faithful sketches of the most interesting places through which we pass, and I hope by these means to furnish a little illustrated tour for the fire-side of ———.

Since the late peace with France, it has become a fashion with the English to visit that country: the greater part make Paris and its vicinity the chief objects of their excursion. Having passed some time in viewing the curiosities, buildings, and other interesting novelties, which that city presents, they return to England, and generally form their judgment, both of the country and people, by the impressions they have received from visiting the metropolis of France. But it must be recollected, that, of so extensive a territory, Paris is but one city, and that the metropolitan refinement which there prevails can afford us no just idea of the manners and mode of living of the French nation at large. To form an impartial judgment of any country, we must view the people in the provinces, in their distant towns, when unconnected by a constant and immediate intercourse with England and other nations. This object can scarcely be accomplished in France by a visit merely to its greatest city.

I must now give you some account of ourselves. We left Brighton last night at nine o'clock, and set sail for Dieppe. The wind was most favourable and the evening serene; we remained on deck till a late hour to enjoy the fresh air. The scene, when the morning broke, was truly deplorable; sick beaux and sick ladies presented themselves on deck, like so many languid ghosts.

We landed at Dieppe at ten o'clock this morning, and passed the custom-house and police examination.

I could but ill describe to you the various feelings that I experienced on first setting foot upon a foreign land. Every thing new; every thing so different from the objects to which I had been accustomed since childhood. Every thing told me I was a stranger indeed! No face of kindred country, no accent of my native tongue, spoke the happy assurance we all feel when surrounded by our fellow people. The change of customs, and objects, all strike forcibly upon the traveller's mind, immediately on his landing. The difference even of religion and laws is impressed upon him; the first by the large crucifix that stands erect above the pier, and the last by the gens d'armes, who will not permit him to land till he produces his passport. What surprise do even the commonest objects excite! The strange and singular appearance of the Norman women; the children who throng around you; the shops, the houses, every thing creates a feeling of curiosity and wonder, that whispers, Where am I? Where is England? Nothing recalls the remembrance of it here. The chamber into which you are shown is still a matter of fresh surprise: every little arrangement of household convenience differs from your own. The order of your repast, the domestics who attend upon it, the manners of the *femme de chambre*, afford alike subjects of novelty and remark.

Dieppe is a large old town: its houses are built of stone,—lofty, and extremely picturesque; I should think few of them have been erected within the last century. The streets are not accommodated for foot-passengers in the same manner as ours, but are paved all alike with common round stone: men, horses, and carts press along them, and mingle together in mixed confusion.

Many of the houses in Dieppe are architecturally scenic, and have high slanting roofs; the public buildings, spiral tops. The castle stands on a cliff to the west of the town: it is an interesting and venerable pile. There are here two very large churches. St. Jaques, the first we visited, is of Gothic architecture of the fifteenth century, highly and richly ornamented, but verging on a bad taste: some part of the exterior displays the unfeeling ravages of the Revolution; the aisles of the interior resemble those of Westminster Abbey, having several lateral separations made for chapels, each appropriated to the altar of some saint: in the decoration of these, the French have lavished all their taste, in bad pictures, shabby finery, dirty artificial flowers, and other trumpery. A wretched wooden figure of the Virgin was gaily decked out, in white muslin, with beads and flowers; and in her hand, suspended from a string, she held an ostrich egg. In another saint, or virgin, some decoration appears equally absurd. Various confessionals are intermixed with these dedicated altars, where the priest sits, as it were, in a wooden box, and through a little carved lattice on either side, hears the confession of the penitent. In this church I was much struck by a display of enthusiastic devotion in the lower orders: for Christianity is the poor man's solace, it reconciles him to his painful and laborious portion in this world, by showing him a futurity, wherein by the just dispensation of Providence, all conditions are equalised to their comparative scale of virtue.

You enter one of the side-chapels by a little door, where there is an altar placed within a recess of the wall: a figure, representing our Saviour after the crucifixion, lies extended in front; the crown of thorns encircles the head; the holes pierced by the nails, and the blood issuing from them, appear upon the

hands and feet. Several flowers were scattered over the body. Around it stand figures, the size of life, carved in wood, representing the Virgin, Mary Magdalen, and the Disciples. These Gothic painted figures are the work of the commencement of the sixteenth century. Before the Christ were burning forty or fifty tapers, each offered with the prayers of some devotee, and corresponding in number with the benefits solicited by the individual.

Before the image of Christ, several clean and neatly-dressed poor women were fervently praying on their knees. Their prayers ended, they arose, kissed the figure of Christ, and left the altar. Many other women were praying in different parts of the church, with an earnest and serious appearance of devotion. If this strict observance of their religion affects and influences their morals, and their lives, it is well; and the lower order of the French may be better than the higher, who have, for the greater part, abandoned such superstitions.

The second church we visited is extremely large, but composed of a confused intermixture of all styles of architecture, from the twelfth down to the middle of the sixteenth century. The columns of the interior are massy, and chiefly circular; the diameter of the base of each appears immense; but the building is altogether heavy, and ruinous in several parts.

The shops in the streets of Dieppe, with the exception of a few, have no fronts at all; they are quite open: the goods exposed for sale are placed on counters, and suspended around the interior. On landing in a foreign country, we naturally compare its maritime towns with those on our own coast; and, if we except the picturesque appearance of the buildings, ours are far beyond the French. The best shops here are shabby, compared

with many of the poorest in England; and I am convinced that any Frenchman, landing in our country, must be more struck with the wealthy display and highly finished manufacture of the goods exposed for sale in our ports, than we can be surprised by what is curious in their buildings; for that seems the chief interest this place affords.

The people of Dieppe do not bear that characteristic appearance which we erroneously attach to the French countenance, as they are mostly fresh-coloured and well-looking; and I hear they are the same throughout Normandy. The women wear very high caps, flying out on each side, towards the back of the head, and something resembling in form the tail of a peacock when it is spread: these caps are white, and neatly plaited. Their petticoats are so short that they reach scarcely below the knee. Blue stockings, with a red skirt or jacket, seems their favourite dress. The lower orders of the French wear an appearance of extreme poverty; for one cannot walk through the town without being struck with the evident penury and neediness of their condition. Here there is scarcely a single person to be met of the order we term gentry in England; whilst in our maritime towns we see continually persons of that class. When walking through the streets, and the thronged market, I attentively observed the people, and at first imagined that longevity in the women was as common in France as it appeared extraordinary. Many females looked so wretchedly old and withered, their faces so covered with deep and innumerable wrinkles, that I supposed some of them were at least ninety years old. Curiosity induced me to enquire of several their ages, when I found the eldest to whom I had spoken had not reached her seventieth year. I never saw such very miserable decrepit-looking women in any part of England.

After rambling about the town, we returned to dine at the *table d'hote:* had I leisure, I would give you a more particular account of the company, for they were strange enough to deserve record. My next neighbour, at dinner, was a French gentleman, of a most monstrous size, whose naturally fierce look was considerably augmented by a large pair of well-curled mustachios: he seemed a mixture of all kinds, and yet was neither decidedly, bear, monkey, or man. He wore, suspended by a little red ribband, an ornamented cross; a kind of order as common in France as the title of esquire on the back of a letter in England, and often applied with as little just pretension. On the opposite side, sat an old beau of sixty, dressed in a sky-blue coat; his hands were scented, and his fingers covered with French-paste rings. Next to him, a pretty lively woman, who conversed so familiarly with all the gentlemen that I was greatly surprised when I found she was an entire stranger at the board. Conversation seemed as much the object of attention as their repast; the whole party spoke together, and made a most unceasing voluble noise.

We go to-morrow morning to Eu, in the diligence, and feel no fear of accidents in our road; for I should as soon expect to be upset in a broad-wheeled waggon as in some of the diligences I have seen at the door of our hotel. Imagine a large clumsy conveyance, like a moving house; the horses having a high heavy collar, stuffed with hay, upon their necks; the harness composed of ropes, and the whole bearing a very shabby appearance. The postillion rides with his legs thrust into a pair of jack-boots, bound round with iron hoops; each boot weighs fifty pounds,—an additional incumbrance for the horse.

I am inclined to think that, in expedients of useful invention and ingenious construction, the English are much beyond the French; whilst, in light fanciful baubles, they excel us. Indeed, were I to give my thoughts of the two nations an allegorical dress, I would attire them thus: — England should be a plain steady gentleman, who wore a good lasting cloth for his coat; and France a light gay lady, with much powder, tinsel, and tawdry about her, who shakes off some of it as fast as she moves along. For, assuredly, the English character, (from its sobriety less dazzling than the French,) derives its value from solidity, and gains upon our esteem by a long and intimate acquaintance; while the French, by a brilliant display, dazzles at first sight, and leads us to expect more than we find realised, and loses something every time we attempt a closer examination.



LETTER II.

My dear ———, Eu.

Although but two days have elapsed since I wrote to you, I cannot neglect the opportunity afforded, by being so near the coast, of sending another letter, certain, as I am, that you will be pleased to hear again from me, before we pursue our journey. We left Dieppe on the morning of the 12th instant, and arrived to breakfast at Eu, a distance of fifteen miles.

We have been much amused since we came here: — Eu is worth seeing; it has two churches, and an hospital for the sick, attended, as is usual in France, by the nuns of charity, or *Hospitaliers*. The finest church, that of Notre Dame, is extremely large, and of beautiful Gothic architecture. Near a side-altar, dedicated to St. Laurent, stands a curious twisted column, of which I have made a drawing: it is remarkable that the capital of this column is the work of the thirteenth century, and the singular twisted shaft with the base, that of the fifteenth.

We went yesterday morning to high mass at Notre Dame; although a detail of the ceremonies practised in the Roman Catholic Church may be somewhat tedious, yet I cannot but give you an account of them, as they relate to forms with which you are totally unacquainted; and I am inclined to think that persons who visit foreign countries, are too apt to relate things generally known, and pass over others, that derive their interest from their connection with the manners and morals of the people. This neglect may, in a great measure, arise from

so constantly witnessing them, that they no longer appear objects of interest. The church was filled with people: the greater part were women, and of the same class as the inhabitants of Dieppe; but being Sunday, they were more respectably dressed. Scarcely were there half a dozen persons above the common order. If gentry reside here, as in English country towns, I know not where they hide themselves, or where they live; for I have as yet seen neither them nor their houses.

The dresses of the women had a very pretty effect: they wear no hats, but high white caps, sometimes lined with pink silk; in these caps, their favourite article of dress, they display all their vanity and taste in fanciful decorations. Their large ear-rings, and a singular gold or silver ornament (in the form of a heart, which they wear suspended by black velvet round the neck), are very tasteful and becoming. Their bright-coloured shawls, petticoats, stockings, jacket, and apron, all of different colours, from their variety, produce so lively an effect, that half a dozen Norman girls assembled together, remind one of the gay hues of a nosegay. They are generally good-looking florid women, with a sprightly dark eye.

The mass was said in Latin, and chiefly by three officiating priests. It appeared to me, (but I may speak erroneously,) that all the forms and ceremonies were conducted as much as possible by threes, figurative perhaps, as I conjectured, of the Trinity. High mass is literally nothing more than a splendid theatrical pageant, very silly and childish when you reflect upon it, yet very imposing and serious to the ignorant and credulous. I remember having seen mass performed in London; but the splendour of that exhibition was not to be compared with this.

The high altar stands nearly at the end of the centre aisle,

towards the east: a young priest of a stern and severe aspect was officiating; he chaunted the service in a loud and deep voice, whilst two other priests were parading up and down the aisle. Presently they changed places, fell back, and stood behind each other in a line; at one moment bowing thrice to the cross, at another holding a book, which they alternately kissed. A bell was rung by a boy, when several children attired in white robes, swung silver pots of frankincense. The chief officiating priest then advanced towards the altar; thrice he knelt down, and thrice arose, and with many gestures and much parade, took from beneath a little velvet canopy, covered by a curtain, the host, which he solemnly consecrated. This ceremony reminded me of the forms used by jugglers in conjuring. A boy brought to him a silver vessel, into which he poured frankincense, the other priests assisting in the ceremony. The bell was again rung, when all the congregation fell upon their knees, and the priest raising the consecrated cup and wafer, the host was elevated in view of the people. Some time after, two boys carried each a small silver plate (which I believe had touched the host), from the altar, and slowly walking down the aisle, they presented to the several priests who were seated in the choir, the little silver plate, which they all devoutly kissed. During some parts of the service, high candles were lighted: these the children held, kneeling at a short distance from the altar. Two boys dressed in long pink draperies, covered with light muslin, held large brazen pots of holy water; whilst the priest, with a brush, which he dipped into them, rained the contents on those around, as he walked down the aisle of the church. During one part of the service, he kissed and put on a rich stole, then removed it. Sometimes the organ played, but not to accompany

the voice. I find it is intended as a pause to relieve the priests, who, singing and chaunting the whole service, are necessarily fatigued by so continued an exertion. The serpent, played by two of the clergy, accompanies the voice during some parts of the office. The shrill voices of the children, frequently united with the deeper tones of the priests, and the loud blasts of the serpent, produced rather a discordant effect. Presently they all disappeared, and soon after entered the church, parading every aisle in the following order, and singing to the deep notes of the serpents during the whole ceremony. First came a priest bearing a high silver cross, attended by two supporters with lighted tapers. Children dressed in white, swinging frankincense. Boys carrying the holy water. Then the verger dressed in scarlet, and holding a staff, followed by a priest bearing a high silver cross. He was dressed in a splendid cope of green silk, brilliantly ornamented with gold, silver, spangles, and the richest embroidery; beneath this cope he wore a scarlet vest, covered with white muslin, and trimmed with point-lace. Then came several of the clergy, attired in the same rich dress, and singing as they slowly marched along. The whole ceremony was conducted in a manner the most serious and devout. The procession ended, a large cake, with an impression of our Saviour upon it, was brought into the church, carried to the altar, sprinkled with holy water, and blessed; it was then taken out, and afterwards small pieces of it were brought in upon a dish, which was handed about to the priests.

We saw in this church, as at Dieppe, a curious representation of Christ laid out; the figures carved in wood, and really well executed. Whilst we were looking at it, a poor woman brought her candle, lighted and placed it up before the image; she then

threw some fine roses upon the figure of Christ, knelt down, and, with closed eyes and clasped hands, appeared absorbed in deep devotion. Presently she arose, and, after kissing the hands and feet of the image, quitted the altar.

When the service was concluded, we went over the church, and descended by a ladder into the under croft, through a hole where the pavement had been removed, to view the monumental remains of the Earls of Eu.

The entrance, in almost total darkness, was not the most inviting, and somewhat precarious for a dizzy head, or uncertain step. A light was carried before us, by our guide, to these dreary regions of desolated grandeur. After winding through a subterraneous passage so filled with rubbish, that we were obliged sometimes to walk stooping, we entered the under croft. At first I could hardly see sufficiently, by the dim light, that imperfectly showed the objects around, to avoid stumbling over the fragments of broken stone: and here the devastation of the Revolution appeared; every monument had been torn down, and dreadfully shattered, fragments of broken Gothic arches, and columns, were piled amidst dirt and rubbish. A figure in armour, whose surcoat had borne the arms of Artois was most ingeniously stripped of every fleur-de-lis. The mutilated statue of Charles D'Artois, Earl of Eu *, which represents him in armour, is indeed most admirably executed, particularly the head, which displays all the delicacy and expression of living nature. The effigy of the Countess, his wife, Jeanne de Saveuse, was thrown against the wall, with her head half buried in the earth: we could

* Charles D'Artois, the last Prince of the House of Artois, was taken prisoner in the battle of Agincourt, and remained some years a captive in England. He die A. D. 1472.

only see the profile and bosom; the former extremely delicate and beautiful, and the latter so finely proportioned, that I could almost fancy, it seemed to heave with gentle breathings,—such was the skill of the artist, who executed these figures, which are thus disgracefully buried in dirt and oblivion. The heads and hands are carved in white marble, probably of Italian workmanship, the veins appeared even transparent, and the imitation of the flesh is surprisingly excellent. Besides these figures there are several statues of females, of the house of Artois. The fury of the revolutionists seems yet to speak in these stones; they lie tossed confusedly about, as if scattered by the wild ferocity of madness. Day-light dimly broke into this vaulted and subterraneous apartment, through some iron gratings towards the east, and cast a pale gleam on the surrounding objects, which, together with the damp earthy smell, and the ruined piles, gave a feeling of horror to the place where mass was once said for the souls of the departed.

We next visited a small church adjoining the College, formerly occupied by the Jesuits, near the altar is the monument of the great Duke of Guise, who was murdered at Blois, A. D. 1588, and of his wife Catherine of Cleves Nevers. Upon an entablature a battle is represented; above rests a recumbent figure of the Duke, in his armour; and again above that another recumbent figure of the same Duke, attired in his state robes. The Duchess lies in like manner on the opposite side. At two o'clock we attended service in the chapel of the Hospital. The sick persons are lodged in an apartment of great length, and very lofty: from the windows being open, the air is perfectly wholesome; the beds are placed on either side the chamber, each having the name of a saint, with herbs and flowers suspended at the foot. We left the hospital and entered the little chapel, when we ob-

served, that, by throwing back some folding doors, the hospital was now united with the chapel, the long ward facing the altar.

On the south side appeared a large iron grating, about twelve feet in height, a black curtain covered it entirely within the bars. In the centre of the grating opened a little door, sufficiently large to show the head and part of the figure: before this burnt a lamp. An image of the Virgin that hung above the altar attracted our notice, from the ludicrous effect it produced. She was dressed out with peacock's feathers, dirty flowers, yellow petticoats, and a white veil. The greater portion of the service was performed by the nuns, who chaunted in Latin. During the mass, while the priest was kneeling at the altar, the small iron grate opened, and a nun closely veiled appeared; she lighted a taper at the lamp, when immediately the organ pealed; the priest took from behind a little embroidered canopy the host, which he raised in view of the assembly: at that instant the large black curtain was drawn back, and through the iron grating, in a vaulted Gothic chamber, we perceived, on bended knees, and closely veiled the sisters, chaunting in loud and shrill notes. About the conclusion of the mass, the congregation turned towards the sick-ward, at the sound of voices faintly singing in the distance, the voices gradually became louder, till at length the nuns slowly advanced from the extremity of the ward, in regular procession. The abbess came first, bearing a silver cross, supported by two nuns, who held lighted tapers; a casket probably of relics was borne by a sister who headed the centre column of the procession. The nuns followed two and two, each bearing an embroidered book, from which they chaunted; they advanced as far as the spot where the folding doors had been thrown back, and, bowing to the altar, retired by another entrance, still singing,

till their voices were lost in the distance. The dress of these females consists of a full white calico gown, a sort of flannel coat, a long and broad chin cloth, with a square white cap, covered by a large black veil that falls back over the shoulders, and hides the face as far as the mouth; but the veil is of a texture sufficiently transparent to show the features of the wearer.

We quitted the hospital, and walked to the chateau of Eu; a palace built by the daughter of the Duke de Panthievre, afterwards Duchess of Orleans, in whose family the estate has ever since remained. The chateau is a large and massy building, resembling the prints you have seen of the Thuilleries: but half of it exists at the present time, the Revolution having destroyed the rest. A little girl conducted us to the *Concierge*, (who has charge of the house,) as we wished to see the interior. The housekeeper of the chateau d'Eu is a tall, handsome woman, who appeared, at least five and thirty. Her long gold ear-rings, her necklace, and white cap, adorned a head and neck that might rival many a beauty of St. James's. She smiled with great good humour when we approached, and soon acquainted us with her own simple history: — she was married, had six children, and was but twenty-five years old. The women, in this part of France, certainly soon exhibit the marks of time, and look old while they are yet young. The handsome *concierge* we found an intelligent woman of very polished manners, considering her station in life. She made some apt remarks on the English and French character; and begged me to tell her if the English husbands really loved their wives. I replied they did; and that I knew many instances of perfect domestic happiness. "Ah! Madam," said the young woman, "it is not so in France: a French husband loves his wife the least of all his acquaintance;

but she does not suffer by it with the world, for although he seldom speaks to her at home, yet he is perfectly polite to her abroad. No woman in France hopes to keep her husband's heart longer than the time occupied in wedding rejoicings; but after that, she is not neglected by others, and has many friends both to console and admire her." We laughed at this description of French conjugal felicity, and asked her, if she thought the married lady's consolation consistent with propriety? "Ah! madam," replied the housekeeper, with an arch smile, "you know every thing is *selon l'usage*." Saying this, she turned the key, and bid us go into the hall, with an air of sprightly good breeding, so peculiar to the French, even in humble life. She then conducted us through the house. The rooms are large, and not much out of repair: what furniture remains from the general destruction, conveys a splendid idea of former magnificence. The pictures are poor; two alone possess any merit; that of Catherine de Medicis, in a black dress, and three different mistresses of Louis XIV., all painted on one canvass, and encompassed by one frame; which the housekeeper remarked was a proof of their mutual good humour, and that the heart of a Frenchwoman was too generous to admit jealousy, and too liberal to triumph alone.

The chateau is charmingly situated upon a hill, about a mile and a half from the sea. The river flows through the valley below, and turns the mills belonging to the palace. To the left you enter the park, through an avenue of fine and lofty beech-trees. I could not avoid reflecting upon the change. Here, where once princes, marquisses, and ladies, had displayed all their magnificence, now alone exist those ruined vestiges of former grandeur, that the restless spirit of an infuriated

people had suffered to remain, not allowing them even sufficient patience to complete their own destructive work. We walked round the town: it had been once strongly fortified; the massy ruins of the towers and walls yet remain. In the year 956, Richard the first Duke of Normandy, granted the town of Eu to his natural son, William, who from that time bore the title of Earl of Eu.

We went, this evening, from the chateau to Tresport, a town situated upon the coast; it was burnt in the year 1545, by Sir John Dudley, who destroyed the abbey. The church of Tresport is most singularly and romantically situated, upon the extreme verge of a lofty and almost perpendicular cliff. The projecting door-way is of beautiful Gothic architecture. The prospect, from this spot, of the sea, the adjacent cliffs, and the town that lies in the bottom, extended like a map, is extremely grand and imposing.

Before I bid you good night, I must not omit telling you, that I have the singular good fortune to be lodged on the site of the very house, where the tutelary saint of Eu, St. Laurent, first made his descent from heaven, and where he afterwards died. On the hill, a short distance from the town, stands a cross, which marks a spot memorable from the wonderful miracle there performed. For at that place the good saint, intending to pray, and standing upon a stone, chanced to turn round, when the stone turned also. The impression of his heel still remains; and there the devout people of Eu go every year, to pray and dance, during the space of nine days, to the memory of St. Laurent.

I am sure, did you know with how many noises I have been almost stunned, since the commencement of this letter, you



would applaud my zeal to oblige you, which has enabled me to continue it, in defiance of them all. Hogarth's enraged musician was scarcely more tormented; — without-doors, under the market-place, that faces our inn, a *grimacier*, and rope-dancer, has been entertaining the multitude with his buffoonery. Accompanied by the sound of hautboys, fiddles, the beating of drums, and a variety of noises, that united their jarring discord as if in mockery of music. In the chamber adjoining mine, separated only by a partition so thin that I hear every sound, a monsieur, who, I find, unites the professions of tailor and *maître d'agrémens*, was instructing a little girl, daughter of our *maîtresse d'hôtel*, in the art of dancing. They jumped so intolerably, that the floor shook at every step. The loud voice of the master rose higher than that of his violin; and his encouraging expressions to his pupil were so truly diverting, that I could not avoid listening to them: — "*Tournez, Mademoiselle, — tournez les yeux vers les cieux.*" A Frenchman's expressions are always upon the grand scale, as Sterne long since remarked: but what, thought I, can a dancing-master have to do with the eyes of his scholar; a plain Englishman would not have carried his instructions beyond the management of the feet, or the arms, at most; but in France the effect which the execution of a thing is to produce, is as much considered as the thing itself: so I imagine, therefore, the management of the eyes is of no small importance in the art of dancing. I was confirmed in my conjecture; for the master dismissed his little pupil with the encouraging exclamation of "*Allez, vous-en jolie mignonne, tu seras coquette un jour.*"

In France, from the lady who figures in high life, down to the girl who moves in the humblest sphere, a desire to attract ad-

miration, and a spirit of coquetry seems to actuate them all, and gives to the countenance of each the perpetual smile of pleasing and being pleased. The servant who attends us here, is a very pretty Norman girl: she smiles upon every body most graciously, and bestows her attention with equal good humour, without considering the rank and condition of each individual. I found her this morning talking so kindly to a young man, that I concluded he was her *cher ami.* Benevolence, I doubt not, is a customary virtue, in the bosom of a pretty *suivante;* for, but an hour since, a fine gay stranger came to the inn, bringing with him a paroquet. The damsel handed him his coffee, and, with a smiling look, asked if it pleased him. "It must," replied the stranger, "if it is as agreeable as yourself." — "Ah, monsieur," rejoined the girl, "I am too happy in pleasing you." She then caressed the paroquet, who, less tender of the damsel than her master, seemed little pleased with her attention. The youth and maiden carried on a very flippant and familiar dialogue, till the bird at length bit her finger, upon which she exclaimed, "It is nothing; — the worst wound is that given to the heart:" and so saying, she quitted the room. "Go, pretty Norman," thought I, "*tu es coquette aujourdhui.*"

P. S. We return to Dieppe to-morrow, whence we continue our journey to Rouen.

LETTER III.

My dear ——, Rouen.

I am now writing to you from the ancient city of Rouen, where we arrived on Thursday morning, at five o'clock, having quitted Dieppe on the Wednesday evening. What we observed of the scenery in the vicinity of Rouen, when the day broke, was very delightful; steep hills covered by hanging woods, valleys, and chateaux, gave a peculiar and beautiful character to the country. On entering Rouen, the attention of the stranger is arrested by the busy population of the town, by the manufactories, and shipping, whilst the crowded quays, display the commercial traffic of the city. We were struck with the beauty of the Cathedral here, and regretted that the streets around this majestic, and wonderful edifice, are so close and dirty. This part of Rouen is the old town, as the houses, from their forms, and manner of building, are certainly very ancient, many of them extremely singular and picturesque, several entirely Gothic, mostly built of wood or stone. Some of these mansions are so decayed, that they appear ready to fall upon their inhabitants; the shops are small, and not at all elegant.

The cathedral church, said to be erected by the English, of all the Gothic structures I have yet seen, is the most costly and magnificent; the building, of the florid Gothic kind, is literally frosted with ornaments. This cathedral was founded A. D. 990, by Robert, Archbishop of Rouen, brother of Richard the Second, Duke of Normandy; but it was not finished till the year 1062, when, in the presence of William the Conqueror,

it was dedicated to the Holy Virgin. Of this, the original building, nothing now appears: the most ancient parts are the door-ways, which, together with a great portion of the edifice, is the work of the thirteenth century, the rest of the building is of the fifteenth. The cathedral is 410 feet in length, 83 in breadth, the length of the cross-aisles is 164 feet, and the height of the spire 395 feet; that of the towers towards the west 236 feet; the width of the portal at the west end, including the towers is 170 feet; there are seven entrances to the cathedral, and 130 windows. Immediately over the large door-way, at the western entrance, carved in stone, the root of Jesse is represented, from whose several branches arise figures, terminating in the centre with one of our Saviour, as the last of the line. Above and around this subject, in several compartments, appear various histories from the Bible, carved likewise in stone. Above another door-way, in the west front, the story of the daughter of Herodias dancing before Herod, is represented in a most singular manner. She appears like one of those dancers, or tumblers, who were employed for the amusement of courts in the thirteenth century, and is literally tumbling before Herod with her head on the ground, and her heels in the air. This seems to us a strange mode of treating such a subject; but it was by no means uncommon at the time this was executed. On the same front are ranged above eighty figures, of a colossal size, representing saints and apostles: these images, although considerably larger than life, appear but diminutive, in comparison with the majestic proportions of the building. Besides this host of carved figures, the most fantastic, elegant, and rich Gothic devices every where abound. There is not the smallest piece of stone, not the back of a niche, nor the base of a figure, but is covered with the

finest Gothic work. Above the north door-way the subject of the Last Judgment is admirably carved; and on each side the walls, without the entrance, stand two female figures, their heads broken off, but their draperies are of tasteful and exquisite workmanship. Some part of the building has been injured during the Revolution; when it is likely these figures also suffered. The south front is extremely elegant in its proportions, and ornaments.

The interior of the cathedral is so imposingly beautiful, that on entering the aisles, the mind is struck with an involuntary awe: the sombre light reflected through the painted windows, the majestically fretted roof, the high vaulted arches, all combine to strike the beholder with that feeling of veneration, and to inspire that disposition towards serious contemplation, which does indeed so well prepare the mind for devotional exercise. We are naturally susceptible of powerful impressions from external things, and our feelings are capable of being softened, exalted, and refined by the contemplation of majestic and imposing objects. There was undoubtedly great wisdom in the erection of such buildings for religious purposes; for who can enter them without feeling they are most proper to be devoted to the worship of a Divine Being. Every window in the cathedral is filled with fine painted glass. The subjects consist of several groups and figures, the size of life; some are of various and fantastic ornaments, whose brilliant hues are so gorgeous, and dazzling, that, although the variety of their devices are endless, yet their luminous brilliancy forbids the eye long to rest upon one object.

In the choir we saw the spot where once were placed the tombs of John Duke of Bedford, Regent of France; Henry, brother of Richard I.; and Cœur-de-Lion's heart. A flat stone now alone marks each spot; the monuments, with the effigies of Henry and

Richard, having been destroyed for some comparatively trivial purpose, a considerable time before the Revolution. A.D. 1199. The heart of Richard I. enclosed in a silver box, was interred near the high altar of Rouen Cathedral, according to that Prince's injunctions before his decease. A magnificent tomb was erected to the memory of Richard, his effigy lay extended upon it, and represented him attired in his royal robes. A balustrade of silver once encompassed the monument; but in 1250, the Dean and Chapter of Rouen ordered that it should be melted down, and applied as a contribution towards the ransom of the famous St. Louis, then a prisoner amongst the Pagans. Henry the younger, second son of Henry II. King of England, who was crowned both at Westminster and Winchester, during the life-time of his father, was buried, first in the church of St. Julien, at Mans, near his grandfather Geoffrey Plantagenet, but his body was afterwards removed to this cathedral, by the solicitation of the citizens of Rouen, to whom Henry had bequeathed it. Between two pillars on the north side of the choir, under a monument of black marble, were interred the remains of John, Duke of Lancaster, third son of Henry IV. King of England; this tomb was destroyed by the Hugonots 1562. Here also was buried, A. D. 1164, William, third son of the Empress Maud by her second husband Geoffrey Plantagenet. The heart of Charles V. who died at the castle of Vincennes, in 1380, was brought to Rouen, and buried with great pomp in the cathedral: his tomb was on the south side of the chapel of the Virgin. In the chapel of St. Romain lie the remains of the celebrated Rollo, third Duke of Normandy: they were removed from near the high altar, when the choir was rebuilt. On the tomb of Rollo there is an effigy representing him, but it is not

a work of his time, — probably not earlier than that of St. Louis. In this cathedral, there is also a monument and effigy of William Longespee, fourth Duke of Normandy, and son of Rollo; this tomb is of the same date as the former. St. Romain was Archbishop of Rouen, and died in 644: his body was removed in 1036, and in 1090 it was placed within a splendid shrine, which was burnt by the Hugonots in 1562. Some fragments of the saint's body being then preserved, they were kept as relics at this cathedral. In the chapel of the Virgin, there is a most beautiful tomb in memory of the Cardinals D'Amboise: two figures of the cardinals, the uncle and nephew, are carved in white marble, the size of life; they are represented in a kneeling posture, the hands raised in prayer; beneath these figures appear Charity, Truth, Fortitude, Justice, and Temperance. Behind the cardinals, in various compartments, are rich carvings, intermixed with saints, &c.; this tomb was erected in 1522. In the same chapel, on the opposite side is the monument of Louis de Brezé: it is of the Corinthian order, admirably carved in white marble; the figures are of the natural size. Above, Louis de Brezé is represented on horseback, in armour; beneath, lies his effigy extended upon a coffin, the limbs are executed with all that lifeless expression, and ghastly appearance, that renders death indeed the king of terrors. At his head kneels his wife attired in a widow's habit; a female figure holding a child in her arms, stands at the feet. This noble monument of Louis de Brezé, Grand Seneschal of Normandy, was erected to his memory by his widow, Diana of Poitiers, Duchess of Valentinois, in 1531. In the epitaph, she promises, as having been faithful to his bed, so likewise faithfully to share his tomb; but, as Diana became afterwards the mistress of Henry the Second of France, it is not

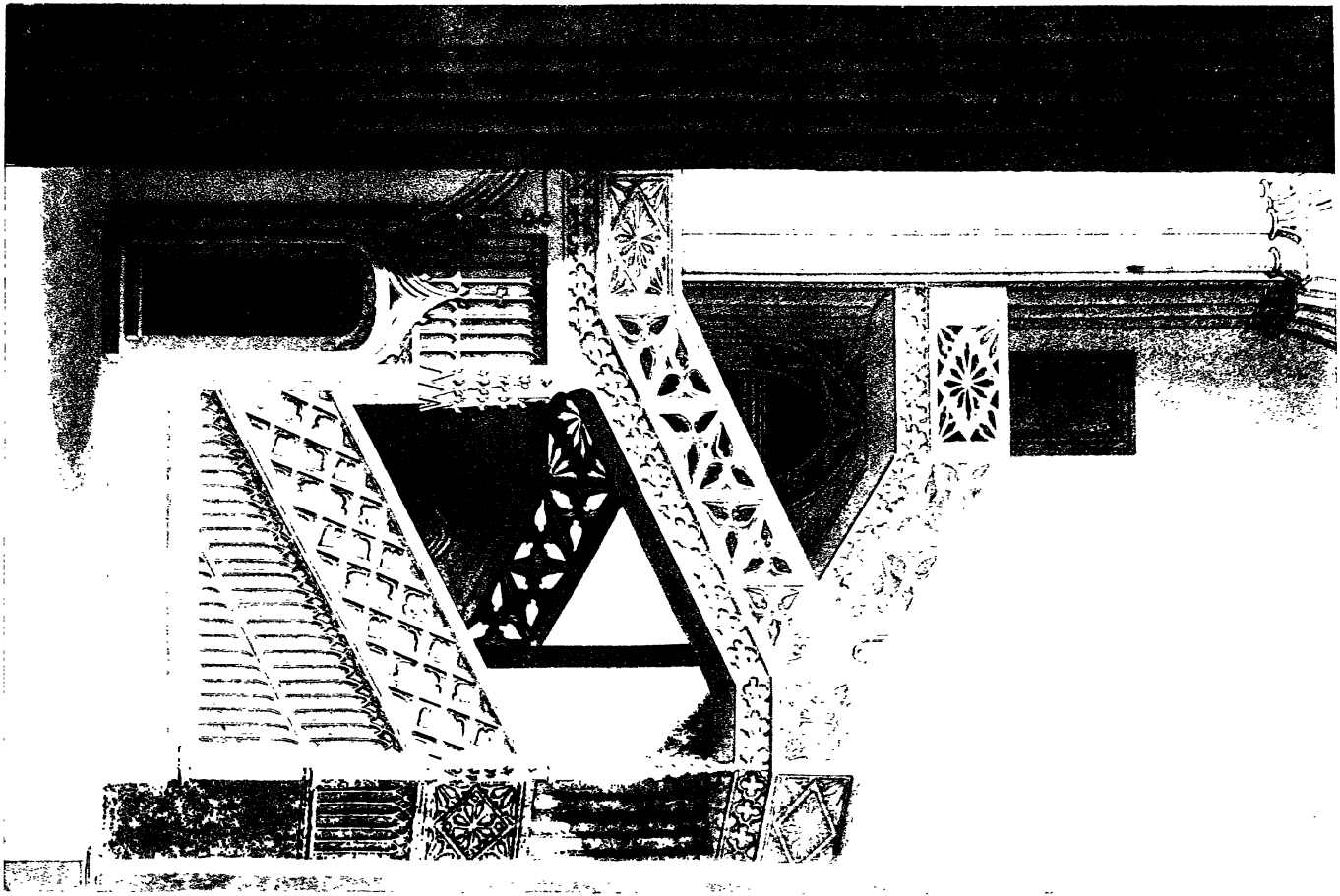
improbable, that the lady forgot her promise, for she was buried elsewhere.

In this cathedral there is a Gothic staircase of great beauty, which leads to the library belonging to the church. The building of the fine tower called *La Tour de Beurre* was commenced in 1485, with the money paid by the people of Rouen, for an indulgence purchased by them, to eat butter instead of oil during the solemn fast of Lent.

The church of St. Ouen equals in beauty the cathedral. Before the Revolution, it belonged to a convent of Benedictine monks; their house, and the many interesting remains of antiquity the church once contained were destroyed during that period. The length of St. Ouen, from the chapel of the Virgin at the east end, to the west door, is 416 feet. The abbey of St. Ouen, originally built by King Clothaire, was in a great degree destroyed in 842. The present building is a work of the fourteenth century. In the church of St. Ouen, among other celebrated persons, was buried John Talbot, son of the great Lord Talbot, who was General of the English troops in the reign of Henry the Sixth, of England. John Talbot died January 4th, 1438. Upon his tomb which now does not exist; this inscription appeared:—

"Cy gist noble JEAN TALLEBOT,
"Fils du Sieur de Tallebot Mareschal de France, qui decedat es annees de puerilitie le 4 Janvier, 1438."

The Palais de Justice, (or, as it is called, *La Place de Justice*), is a building like our Westminster Hall, but of a more ornamented architecture, and appropriated to much the same purposes. Here are courts of justice, and the lawyers are seen walking about in their gowns. The Palais de Justice is an extremely beautiful Gothic structure; the erection of it was commenced in the year 1493. Here the Parliaments of Normandy were formerly held.



La Salle des Procureurs, a chamber in the Palais de Justice, was formerly intended as a place of meeting for the merchants, to prevent the great scandal of their transacting business in the church of Notre Dame, it is 160 feet in length, and fifty in width; remarkable for the beauty of its proportions and workmanship.

La Place d'Orleans, the spot where Joan of Arc was burnt, excites the attention of every traveller. When Normandy came again into the possession of the French, in 1454, the family of Joan procured the Pope's bull for the reversion of her sentence: her memory was declared innocent, and a cross erected upon the spot where she was burnt; this was removed before the Revolution, and a modern statue of her now stands above a triangular fountain, in the same place. Here are several houses so ancient, that they must have been coeval with the event, which gives an interest to this site.

To visit the scene of an action so memorable, without some brief notice of the events that constitute its celebrity, would be perhaps to neglect a principal duty of local description. An ancient castle or a ruined wall, (if we except its picturesque appearance), deserves no better claim upon our attention, than any other edifice, were it not for the historical events, of which it is the existing memorial. When we contemplate the very scene of an important action, fancy re-peoples the desolated spot, and and carries us back to times long past. All things placed at a distance, however well authenticated, partake in some measure of the character of fable, till their former existence is recalled, and impressed upon our conviction by the silent, but certain evidence of their identity and truth.

Various historians have written so much, and so contradictorily about Joan of Arc, that it seems difficult to determine in whose

relation we should confide. If I may venture an opinion, I should place in none so entire a credence as in the accounts given by Monstrelet, who adduces perhaps the best authority and evidence of her death, by affording us a copy of the letter addressed by the King of England to the Duke of Burgundy, where the entire circumstances of that event are minutely detailed, in positive contradiction to an opinion that Joan was spared, and a log of wood burnt in her stead.

Monstrelet mentions that it was on the evening of Ascension-day, when the Holy Maid sallied from Compiègne, in company with several of her followers, to attack an English outpost. After a fierce assault, perceiving her enemies multiplying fast upon her, Joan gave directions that her party should retreat, and, anxious to save her men, remained in the rear to cover their flight, when she was suddenly attacked and dragged from her horse by an archer, who came upon her ere she perceived his intent. The Holy Maid pledged her faith as a prisoner, and to the great joy of the English, amidst a multitude of foes, she was carried to the castle of Beaurevoir, where the unfortunate Joan remained during many months a captive. The tower in which she was confined, M. Millin notices in his "*Antiquités Nationales*," as a part of the building called *Le Vieux Château.* The King of England, in his letter to the Duke, states that the Maid was brought before her Judges, and accused of having borne arms for upwards of two years in the service of Charles; likewise of having presumptuously given out, that she was deputed by Heaven to espouse his cause; declaring that she had had personal communication with St. Michael, and a multitude of saints and angels in Paradise. The second accusation was founded upon her clothing herself in armour, and male attire, against the custom of her sex, and contrary to the laws of decency and order:

the third, that she had presumptuously demanded to bear the noble and excellent arms of France, which in part she obtained; and fourthly, that she had scandalised all Christendom, by permitting herself to be venerated, as a holy woman. Joan was tried by the Ecclesiastical Court, in consequence of her offence committed against Divine Majesty, by declaring her mission was from God. The Bishop of Rouen, after having consulted the most profound doctors of the canon law, sent to the University of Paris, for their opinion, who determined that Joan was a sorceress of the devil, a blasphemer of God and of his saints, a schismatic, and guilty of many errors against the faith of Jesus Christ.

The King of England, in his letter, says, " that, to save her " soul from perpetual damnation, and to induce her to return " into the way of truth, she was long and charitably preached to; " but that pride and presumption, had so hardened her heart, " and held her so fast bound, that no arguments could induce " her to abjure her errors; for always she declared, what she " had done was meritorious; and, what was far worse, she refused " to acknowledge any power on earth, but God and his saints; " always denying the authority and supremacy of the Pope."

This preaching was repeated in public, many hundred persons being present; but the unfortunate Maid, continuing firm in her resolution, would not recant, and her Judges proceeded to pass sentence upon their victim; when the courage of Joan for once yielded to the dread of punishment denounced against her, and she promised to return into the bosom of the church. She was then ordered to perform a severe penance, during a close imprisonment; but this temper of mind did not long continue. Once more she appeared firm, and with her wonted courage, declared publicly, her cause and her actions had been just. Upon

this, she was instantly condemned to be burnt; "but seeing her "end approach," says the King, "she fully acknowledged that the "spirits that had appeared to her, were often lying and wicked "fiends; and that the promises they had made to set her free, "were false." He concludes thus, "she was publicly led to "the old market-place in Rouen, and there burnt in the pre- "sence of the people."

No doubt can be justly entertained of the truth of this statement; for it is highly improbable the King would send a false account of such an affair to the Duke of Burgundy, or that the infatuated superstition of the times, would be satisfied with less than the life of a woman, whose valorous exploits had so much aided the cause of Charles, and who had denied the supremacy of the Pope. Thus perished, "the young, the beautiful, the brave," and daring Maid of Orleans, whose courage in supporting her Prince, and fortitude in bearing her sufferings, deserved a better fate, and whose name will be venerated, so long as an admiration or respect of heroic deeds exists.

Near La Place d'Orleans, within a court, stands a most curious house (L'Hotel Folleville), built of stone, and formerly a palace. This house is carved all over the front with a regular succession of historical events. The subjects represented, relate to a meeting held between Francis I. and Henry VIII. They are divided into five compartments, beneath as many windows. The heads of Henry and Francis are placed within two niches on each side of the gateway entering the court. A treaty of peace having been concluded between England and France in 1518, the Kings of either nation determined upon an interview, the management of which was intrusted to the care of Wolsey. In record of this meeting, Francis I. caused a house to be carved

with figures, representing the chief persons present at the festival. These carvings are executed in alto-relief, upon white marble tablets. The first compartment, on the left hand, exhibits several persons, who are gazing at the King of England, and his train, whilst they are leaving the castle of Guisnes, to proceed to the appointed place of meeting, in the valley of Andren. In the next, Wolsey appears, between the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk, preceded by a cross-bearer, and two maces, a numerous retinue following, some on foot, others on horseback. In the third compartment, Henry and Francis are seen greeting each other, mounted upon their horses, and surrounded by their nobles and guards. In the fourth, appears the remaining retinue of the French King, preceded by Cardinal Boissy, before whom is borne four maces, and a double cross, as Legate and Cardinal of France: towards the cross is seen a dove, flying from a cloud: the Cardinal is followed by a numerous train of churchmen, and the ambassadors from Rome and Spain. In the fifth, the retinue of Francis appears, represented issuing from the castle-gate of Andres. — This interview took place between these princes, on the 7th day of June, 1520. So costly and magnificent were the dresses worn by all present, and so splendid was the conduct of the whole festival, that it was called *Le Champ de drap d'or.* The justs and entertainments lasted twenty days, excepting two days of bad weather, and Sunday the 17th of June, when the two Kings paid a reciprocal visit to their Queens. Henry dining with the wife of Francis, and Francis with Queen Catherine, at Guisnes. The house in which the Queen of England lodged was most magnificent, and communicated with the castle: in front was the motto,

" CUI ADHÆREO PRÆEST."

On the 25th of June, high mass was celebrated by the Cardinal. Henry and Francis after once more dining with the Queens, took their leave, giving the most costly presents to each other.

In the Rue de Grosse Horloge, a stone archway crosses the street, erected in 1527: above it appears the ornamented dial of the great clock; the belfry containing the timber work, was constructed about the same period; the bell, placed at the top, is alone rung on occasions of public rejoicing. The houses in this street, (which is narrow and dirty), are very ancient and scenic in their appearance.

Rouen was the ancient Rothomagus, the Dukes of Normandy were inaugurated in this city: it contains thirty parishes, and is a town of great commerce, and thoroughfare. Innumerable vessels crowd the Seine, over which a curious bridge is so constructed, upon nineteen barges, that it rises and falls with the flux and reflux of the tide; any part of the bridge can be removed to give passage to a ship of the greatest burthen, and put together again in a very short time. The length of the bridge is two hundred and seventy feet; it was invented by Brother Nicholas Bourgeois, a monk of the convent of the great Augustins, at Paris, A. D. 1710. The population of Rouen is very great: here all are busy, all gay; horses, carts, carriages, and foot passengers are continually passing in quick succession. Of an evening the town is indeed amusing: some walk in parties, gaily dressed; others, seated upon the bridge of boats, enjoy the fresh air, and the lively passing scene; the military parade the town, beating their drums; some smoke, whilst others in parties listen to the buffoonery of a charlatan. The crowded *cafés*, the women selling fruit, clothes, and trinkets in their stalls in the open streets, or



on the banks of the river, under the shade of high trees, all reminded me of the gaieties of a holiday fair; whilst the fine clear sky, and warm atmosphere, gave an air of happy serenity and exhilarating enjoyment to the scene. To give you a better idea of what is passing, you must turn with me towards Mount St. Catharine, and there look around you. Rouen is seven miles in circumference, including the suburb of St. Severe: the Seine winds and undulates through a vast tract of country; near the city it is filled with shipping. Many large and picturesque buildings are upon its banks: on the east side arise the majestic spires of the Cathedral St. Ouen, and several churches. Motley groups of figures are all around us; the horses that draw the carts, sometimes eight or nine, placed one before another in a string, are generally adorned with blue-dyed sheep-skins, a painted board projects from the collar, on each side the neck; which is sometimes ornamented with pieces of looking-glass: other carts are frequently drawn by yoked oxen. The Norman women are carrying their large baskets, with various fine fruits, and flowers, that tempt you to their purchase. Immediately before our view, appears a chain of beautiful hills, so high and abrupt, that they may be termed mountainous; upon them are built many white stone houses, which extend even to their summits. The roads are cut across their steeps, and remind one of Italian scenery. The boldest and most abrupt feature of the landscape is Mount St. Catharine; its high cliffs of white chalk are nearly perpendicular, and form a beautiful contrast to the surrounding woods and valleys. At the base of these lofty hills runs the Seine, in the midst of which are little islets covered with verdure; on the opposite shore are trees of various kinds, fine grass for pasture, corn-fields, gentlemen's seats, farm-houses, and cottages; there likewise appear the

large churches and extensive suburb of St. Severe. Hills in the distance, decorated with the lively tints of summer, together with the undulating windings of the Seine, close the scene, the beauty of which opens more and more upon us, as we ascend the hill towards the Paris road. I must not omit mentioning that Mount St. Catharine abounds with marine fossils; in a large fragment of the rock, which had fallen but a few days since, we observed a vast quantity of these productions.

It is to be regretted, that so many fine churches were destroyed in Rouen, during the Revolution; we have already seen four entirely demolished, excepting some parts of the bare walls; of another church, little more remains than a beautiful projecting door-way. But the finest of these dilapidated structures appears to have been the church of St. Augustine; and here the havoc of the savage mob seemed as if newly made. The large and painted windows were shattered to pieces: in the finest coloured glass, large holes appeared perforated by stones. The fragments of the glass hung in some places suspended by the light lead-work, that once combined the whole. Even this devastation was seen but partially, for far the greater part of the windows were entirely demolished: of the great east window, that portion above the reach of the stones alone remains. A spirit of the revolutionary party seems yet to possess the place: I asked the person who appeared to be the master, (the church being now used as a store-house), if the building had not been destroyed during the Revolution: he replied, it had. Upon my exclaiming "What a pity!" he laughed rudely at my regrets, and with a savage air, exulted in the devastation, saying, he thought it no pity, as it made him an excellent *magasin*. His mirth continued all the time we were there. He remarked to one of his companions, that Madam

thought the destruction of churches a pity, it would make a good comedy, and should be called " *Les Plaintes de l'Eglise, la Comedie des Plaintes de l'Eglise.*"

The horrors of the Revolution must have been beyond all precedent, even in the annals of the most sanguinary and ferocious times. I have been informed by the French, that in the town, I believe, of Arras, every person was murdered, neither sex, age, nor even infancy spared: two persons alone of the opposite party escaped the general destruction. In Rouen, they burst the doors of the cathedral, whilst mass was performing, and murdered every priest; the altar was bathed in blood: all the unfortunate inhabitants of the adjoining convent were also put to death. After glutting their fury with human blood: restless till employed in havoc, they turned their savage spirit against the finest public edifices, anxious to annihilate, not only every place devoted to the worship of God, but even the very name of the Deity. The records of their churches they burnt; all papers within their reach, connected with history, they destroyed: they endeavoured to cancel every remembrance of their Kings and their government. We observed in the château of Eu, these men had taken the trouble to paint over each crown and fleur-de-lis that existed in the decoration of the palace: no town or village escaped their fury; it was a custom with the Revolutionists, after their dinner, when they were heated with wine, to sally forth in parties, prepared to do any mischief the caprice of the moment suggested. Few convents now remain, compared to the numbers existing before the dreadful epocha of the Revolution. One good has certainly resulted from so great an evil, that those drones of society, the monks, who feed on the spoils of the community, by taking advantage of the folly, credulity,

and superstition of the weak, are certainly greatly lessened in their number.

Since I have been in France, the thing that has most surprised me, is the number, extent, and extraordinary beauty of the churches. When I consider their vast magnitude, the richness and delicacy of their workmanship, the immense labour, time, and the innumerable quantity of hands necessarily employed in the erection of such edifices, I am really lost in wonder, and cannot help thinking all the people in past times, did little else than build churches and convents, and give their substance to monks and nuns. Their churches, whilst they endure, must excite the applause and admiration of all ages, mingled with regret that such edifices should have suffered from the fury of political revolutions; at the same time it must be lamented, that the night of superstition is not yet gone by, for the rational mind cannot view without astonishment and regret, so large a portion of the Christian world, absurdly imagining that the worship of the Deity can in any manner consist in dressing up frightful dolls, ringing little bells, parading up and down a church, illuminating and extinguishing wax candles, and a thousand other childish ceremonies. The Roman Catholic faith is not only in many things absurd, but is also dangerous to the peace of individuals, and society at large. The power possessed by the priests of receiving confessions, gives them a wonderful influence over the minds of individuals; they obtain the secrets of families, and by the right of spiritual direction, bend the weak and ductile mind to whatever they may please to impose or advise, whilst they arrogate to themselves, by the absolution they bestow on sinners, that power and supremacy alone the attribute of God. To prove the danger of such superstitious principles, and the errors they induce, I shall but relate a custom which pre-

vailed in this town before the Revolution, the origin of which took its rise from the following tale.

In the reign of Dagobert, King of France, a monstrous serpent inhabited the forest of Rouvray, adjacent to Rouen, and so infested the neighbourhood, that many persons and animals were daily devoured by the fearful reptile. St. Romain, Archbishop of Rouen, who had caused to be destroyed a temple, dedicated to Venus by the antient Gauls, determined to attempt driving out the serpent by conjuration; but finding no person willing to aid him in so perilous an enterprize, he requested the assistance of two condemned criminals, a murderer and a thief. On entering the wood, the serpent no sooner perceived the Bishop, and his followers, than he made towards them, with the intent to devour his opponents. The thief, panic struck, fled before him, the murderer remained with the Bishop, resolutely prepared to receive the serpent's attack. St. Romain immediately threw his stole upon the reptile's neck, which so completely deprived him of all his fierceness and venom, that he suffered himself to be tied and taken captive by the murderer, who was absolved of his crime, for not having abandoned the good saint in his enterprize. The serpent was burnt in that part of the city called *La Place*, and his ashes thrown into the river. St. Ouen, successor of St. Romain, in order to preserve the memory of so extraordinary a miracle, obtained a grant from King Dagobert, (to whom he was chancellor), for setting at liberty each year a prisoner, who had been guilty of murder; a custom which was from that time practised in the following manner. Fifteen days before the feast of the Ascension, four canons in their full robes, accompanied by their chaplains and attendants, summoned the officers of the King to meet in the chamber of parliament, and there caused all the procedures

against capital offences to be suspended, till the criminal had received the privilege granted by King Dagobert. After Rogation Monday, when the most splendid ceremonials were commenced, two canons, with a notary, proceeded to examine the prisoners separately, and to demand of them if they desired availing themselves of the privileged pardon. These depositions were received in form of confession. On the day of the feast of Ascension, all the prisoners were again interrogated, to discover if they persisted in their former statements, or if they would add more to their confessions. At seven in the morning of the same day, all the canons and priests assembled in the chapter-house, and after having invoked the Holy Ghost to grant them grace in their procedure, they solemnly swore never to reveal the criminal depositions they had received. The commissioners then collected all their deliberations, and, after duly considering them, wrote the name of the murderer who should be pardoned, upon a parchment, sealed with the chapter seals. This instrument was immediately conveyed to the Parliament, assembled in the great chamber of the palace. The members were attired in their full dress, wearing red mantles. They confirmed the pardon of the criminal, and entirely absolved him of all that related to the circumstances and nature of his offence. After this, the canons, accompanied by the chaplains, &c. went in solemn procession to a place called *La vieille Tour*, carrying the shrine that contained the body of St. Romain, and singing to the sound of trumpets and hautboys, till they arrived at the chapel of the Saint, into which they carried the shrine. The privileged criminal now approached the altar; after a short confession of his crime, and absolution given by the priest, he then elevated on his shoulders, three several times, the shrine of the

Saint, the people in a loud voice exclaiming, at each elevation, "*Noël, Noël.*"

After these ceremonies, the clergy returned in solemn procession to Notre Dame, accompanied by the prisoner, who marched bare-headed, and crowned with flowers, bearing the shrine. All the procession having entered the choir, high mass was said. The service ended, the criminal was conducted to the master of the brotherhood of St. Romain, who received him into their house, where he was magnificently treated, lodged, and served, however poor or wicked he might have been. The next morning he was again conducted to the Chapter, where, in the presence of the assembly, he was publicly reproved for his crime, another absolution given to him, and then dismissed to enjoy his liberty, as fully as any other subject of the realm. This custom prevailed till the Revolution.

The city of Rouen underwent a memorable siege in the time of our Henry the Fifth, who, after having gained the battle of Agincourt, landed in Normandy the following year, and subdued many towns in that province. He determined upon rendering himself master of Rouen, and marched towards the city, accompanied by the Dukes of Gloucester and Clarence, the Earls of Warwick, Salisbury, and others. Henry stationed his army before Rouen, and in a short time the fort of Mount St. Catharine surrendered to him. The English monarch employed every means then practised in the art of war, to subdue the town; but without effect: the citizens defended it both with courage and prudence, till at length, exhausted by a protracted siege, and receiving no succours from the King of France, they had but the miserable alternative of surrendering, or of holding out till famine should oblige them to open their gates to the enemy, as

their only refuge from a lingering and dreadful death. They resolved, therefore, on deputing some person as an ambassador to their King, who should represent to him their distressed condition, and implore immediate aid and relief. A priest was accordingly chosen, who performed the mission, and returned to Rouen, with promises of assistance both from the King and Duke of Burgundy. Some negotiations were set on foot, for a peace to be concluded between the two monarchs; but they failed of success. The King and Queen of France went to Beauvais, where they employed themselves in raising troops to assist their distressed subjects; but all their exertions proved inefficient, on account of the very strong force Henry had brought before the walls of the besieged.

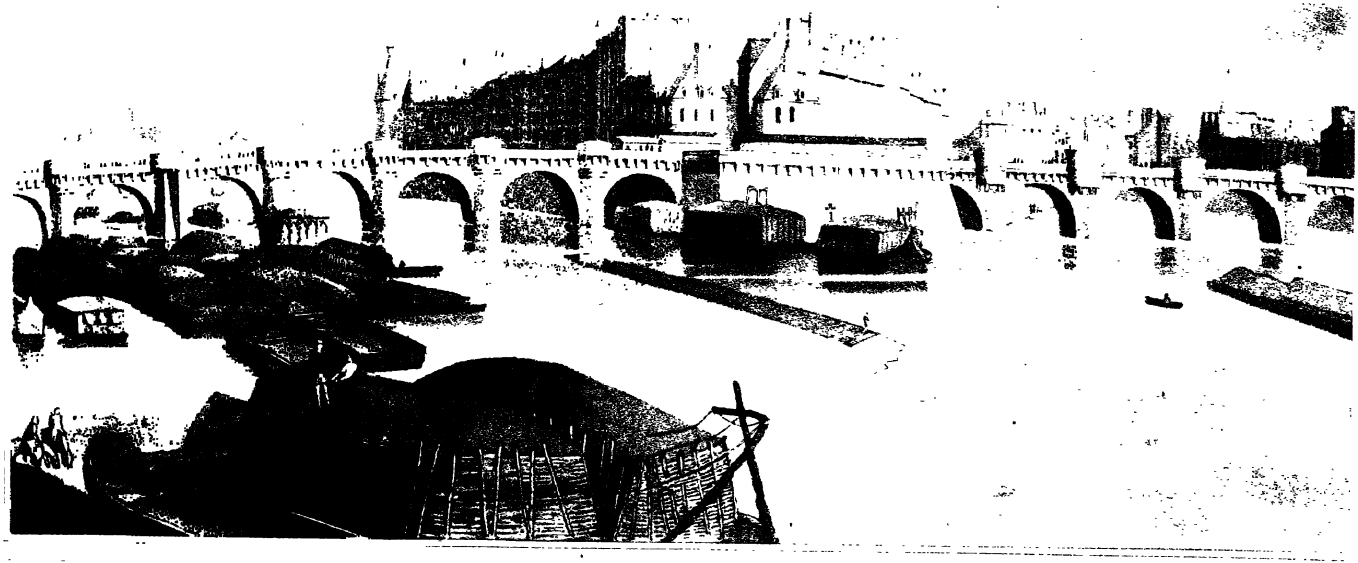
While the King was at Beauvais, several citizens of Rouen were sent to him, who again implored relief, acquainting him with the miserable condition to which they were reduced. They told the king that his subjects were daily expiring from famine, that they had for some time subsisted upon horses, dogs, and even rats and mice, although they had driven from their city some thousands of the poorest inhabitants; the greater part of whom, overcome with weakness, distress, and famine, had expired in the ditches without the walls. Mothers had there been delivered of their children, and the infants newly-born, were drawn up in baskets within the walls, that they might be baptised: they were afterwards returned to their unhappy mothers. "Notwithstanding which," says Monstrelet, "many children perished without baptism." The King promised to send them succours as soon as their number should be adequate to afford essential aid. The deputies returned, but found the wretched inhabitants of Rouen in no condition to await a distant and

uncertain relief. They were already daily perishing of hunger in the streets; the horrors of famine had rendered each individual alive only to a feeling of his own sufferings. If food chanced to pass their door, some desperate man ran out to take it, and a battle often ensued for the prize. Despair seized the citizens; for above 40,000 had perished with famine. To the honour of the people of Rouen, miserable and reduced as they were, they did not offer terms of capitulation till all their hopes were ended of receiving succour, by the French King's dismissing the troops he had raised for their aid.

They promised in the treaty to pay a large sum to the English, to give up three persons in the town, who should be at the disposal of the King, and to swear allegiance to him. Monstrelet tells us, that Henry the Fifth of England, made a splendid entry into Rouen, attended by his nobles and retinue, and that he was followed by a page mounted on a fine horse, bearing a lance, at the end of which was fastened, by way of pennon, a fox's brush; which, says the same historian, "was made a subject of great remark, and much puzzled the wise heads." * The bells rung throughout the town, the abbots wearing their mitres, and the clergy, attired in their robes, and carrying relics, conducted the English monarch to the church of Notre Dame, singing loud anthems all the way. When Henry arrived at the great portal of the cathedral, he dismounted, and bare-headed, reverently bending his body, entered the church, then at the high altar returned thanks to Almighty God for the victory he had gained.

* The fox's brush was probably the badge of Henry the Fifth, adopted from the circumstance of his having killed (but a short time before his leaving England) a fox in the marshes of Kenilworth, which was deemed a prognostic that he would overcome "the craft and cunning of the French King."

The English prince, thus safely in possession of Rouen, built himself a palace or castle on the banks of the Seine, which, in modern times, bore the name of *Le Vieux Palais.* The fort of Mount St. Catherine, was built by one of the early Dukes of Normandy. Henry the Fourth of France, found it of such essential service during the time he besieged Rouen, that, after his public entry into that city, the people solicited that it might be taken down. Henry granted their request, saying, he wished for no other fortress than that of the hearts of the people.



LETTER IV.

Paris, Hotel de Menars,
Rue de Richelieu.

My dear ———,

I am much surprised at not finding a letter from you, as I expected, at the Post Office. If I am again disappointed to-morrow, your silence will occasion me great anxiety; but I trust it does not arise from any other cause, than that delay in answering letters which the traveller finds too frequent in his friends placed at their ease by their own fire-side. I am now writing to you from Paris, the very seat of gaiety and amusement. Could you see the French in their metropolitan city, you would imagine the whole business of their lives consisted in devoting them to an uninterrupted course of pleasure. I do not think Paris appears more than half so large as London; it is built entirely of stone, the houses are very high, the streets narrow, and ill paved. The Palace of the Thuilleries is a large and splendid building; the façade looking towards the gardens, extremely magnificent; but this, and all the buildings erected at the same period as the Thuilleries, are invariably more or less deformed, by their high and slanting roofs. The palace, the gardens, and their decorations of innumerable statues, orange-trees, beds of flowers, shrubs, and shaded walks, united, form a splendid, and striking *coup d'œil.*

Before the entrance to the Thuilleries, stands a fine triumphal arch, erected by Napoleon, in commemoration of his victories; above this arch once was placed the statue of the Emperor, and the celebrated bronze horses, from Venice, the work of Lysippus.

From the spot where the unfortunate Louis was beheaded, Paris is seen in the greatest magnificence. On the left, looking across the Seine, the beautiful Chamber of Deputies attracts the eye; behind it arises the splendid gilt dome of the Hospital of Invalids. Well-built stone houses extend along the banks of the Seine; the barriers, and the Elysian Fields face the Thuilleries. On the other side, opposite the Chamber of Deputies, are several elegant houses, chiefly inhabited by persons of high rank. The gardens of the Palace intersect the space between these houses and the river. Although the style of gardening exhibited in the Thuilleries, is not according to the English taste, yet the white marble statues glittering in the sun, amidst the cheerful greens of orange-trees, produce a very princely and striking effect. Most of these statues are copies from the antique; but there are several executed in a bad French taste.

Adjacent to the Thuilleries, is *La Place Vendome*, in the centre of which stands a brazen column, 130 feet in height, made from the cannon taken in the battle of Austerlitz. This column was erected by Napoleon, in memory of his campaigns in 1805. The whole of this part of Paris certainly presents a majestic view of a metropolitan city. We have this morning seen the fountain, erected to the memory of General Desaix. On a pedestal is placed the bust of the General, whose brow Fame is encircling with "the laurel meed;" in a bas-relief below, he is represented expiring on the field of Marengo. I sincerely wish you were with me, to enjoy the pleasure afforded, by viewing so many objects of interest and beauty: I shall not fail to give you an account of each, as we visit them, according to the leisure I may find for writing; which I fear will not be much during my stay in Paris: be not therefore too critical. I shall endeavour, I

assure you, in my relations, to divest myself of all prejudice, and to give each object deserving praise its just and due share, as far as my judgment may enable me; to a defect of which, if I fail, the error must be charged, and not to careless inadvertency.

We have seen the collection of pictures in the Luxembourg, by the modern French school; several of them are very bad, but some few possess uncommon merit; amongst these is an exquisitely finished picture of Telemachus relating his adventures to Calypso, by Guerin. The figures are most beautifully drawn; Telemachus is seated before Calypso, who appears reclining upon a couch; a nymph leaning on her arm, stands behind her, and a lovely boy by her side. The colouring is clear, natural, and brilliant, and the fine warm tint that pervades the whole, admirably depicts a hot climate, and gives life and animation to every object. There are two other charming productions by Monsieur Pruhdon; the subjects are, the Death of Abel, and the Sun rising on Cain after the commission of the first murder; this last picture is so exquisitely expressive of the subject, that it cannot be contemplated without a shudder of horror: the body of Abel lies extended on the earth, the wife of Cain, weeping, conceals her face with her hands; her hair hangs dishevelled about her beautiful limbs; Cain appears in the foreground, turning from the first dawning beams of the sun, with a look that expresses the horrors of a mind shrinking from the approach of that day, which first found him stained with guilt and harrowed by remorse. It is singular, that the French have no landscape-painters of any eminent or distinguished talent; one would imagine by this, that they had little relish for the beauties of nature, or indeed were divested of all feeling for them. Portrait and historical painting are held in high estimation; but an artist who might give the French representations

of the finest views in their own, and foreign countries, seems hardly to exist.

We have received much gratification from viewing the King's library; in it are preserved many antiquities of great interest, those taken from the grave of Childeric are so extremely curious, that I must not omit giving some brief account of the manner in which they were found. Before Christianity had extended itself to France, the early kings of that nation were interred in the Roman manner, in vaults or graves, without the walls of a town, beneath a tumulus of earth. Childeric, the father of Clovis, was thus buried near the city of Tournay. In the year 1653 his tomb was discovered; in it were found skeletons of a man, a horse, and part of the skeleton of a boy. It was a custom in the early and barbarous ages in France, that whenever a monarch died, his horse and page were killed, and buried with their master, that they might be ready to attend upon him in the next world. Every thing necessary for his use was also placed within the sepulchre. Indeed, so far was this practice carried, that when Queen Austrigilde was dying, she made her husband, King Gontran, promise that he would cause the two physicians, who had attended her during her last illness, to be killed and buried with her. By an order so singular the doctors, most probably, chanced to be fairly rewarded for their labours, by a share in the mortality to which they had, perhaps, consigned their patient. Moliere might have recommended the revival of the injunction, as a likely means of saving the lives of the many who may be said to die of the doctor, a disease not at all uncommon in modern times. When the tomb of King Childeric was opened, besides the bones mentioned, they found a purse, containing about a hundred pieces of gold and two hundred

pieces of silver, bearing the heads of several emperors. A crystal ball, a pike, an axe; the handle, mountings, and blade of a sword; gold tablets and style; the bit, and part of the harness of a horse; some fragments of a dress or robe; more than three hundred little gold bees, their wings being inlaid with a red stone like cornelian. * A gold signet ring was taken from the finger of the entire skeleton; upon it appeared an engraved head, with long hair falling over the shoulders, and around it the words "*Childerici Regis*;" several buckles, two massy gold bracelets, a gold head of an ox, (supposed by some to be an image of Pidole, the heathen god worshipped by Childeric,) were also found in the tomb. The bracelets, ring, and sword, several of the bees, and of the gold coins, with some other of these curious antiquities, are now preserved in the royal library; we were much pleased with examining them; the gold of which they are formed is of the purest kind. It is remarkable, during the early ages in this country, with what splendour it was the custom to encircle the mortal remains of majesty. The account of Charlemagne's funeral, who was thus interred, adorned with the insignia of royalty, is so extremely interesting, that I cannot resist giving it you here. Charlemagne died A. D. 814, his body, after having been embalmed, was wrapped in a shirt of hair-cloth, above which were placed his imperial robes of state, and upon his head a chain of fine gold, in the form of a diadem. His corpse, thus adorned, was lowered into a vault in the church of Notre Dame, d'Aix la

* The bees that were adopted by Napoleon as his favourite and prevailing ornament, were originally copied from those found in the grave of Childeric; and, in consequence of the opinion of the antiquaries that they had been sewed to the robe, the appropriation of the same emblem was first suggested to the Emperor.

Chapelle. The body was then placed upright, in a sitting posture, upon a throne of gold. His sword, *Joyeuse*, (for swords, according to the singular custom of the time, were named,) was girded to his side, and his head fixed in a raised posture, as if looking towards heaven. In one hand he bore a golden ball, the other was placed upon a book of the four Evangelists, which he held upon his knees. His shield and golden sceptre were hung upon the wall facing the body. After depositing great riches, and a quantity of aromatic perfumes within the vault, it was closed up. The exterior of the tomb appeared extremely plain, upon a stone of which were inscribed these words:—

"Here lies the body of that great and orthodox Emperor, Charlemagne, who gloriously extended the empire of France, and reigned happily during 47 years. He died in the 70th year of his age, 814."

We will now return to the curiosities of the museum. Here is the brazen chair said to have belonged to King Dagobert. It was brought from Paris to Boulogne by order of the Emperor Napoleon, who was seated upon it when he distributed the cross of the Legion of Honour. In the library are many valuable things that once belonged to the treasure of St. Denis, before it was despoiled during the Revolution. Amongst these is a beautiful sardonyx carved cup, representing the mysteries of Ceres and Bacchus. But the most valuable thing in this collection is a cameo, the largest known, being fifteen inches long. It is exquisitely cut in sardonyx. This inestimable cameo formerly belonged to La Sainte Chapelle. The natural colours of the stone have been taken advantage of by the artist, (a means frequent in such works,) to give a variety of colour to the faces and bodies, to the hair, and draperies of the figures. The upper

part of the cameo represents the apotheosis of Augustus; beneath, Germanicus is giving an account to Tiberius of his expedition into Germany: Agrippina and his son Caligula are near him. In the lower compartment appear the nations he has conquered. Nothing can surpass the admirable manner in which these subjects are executed. There is an exceedingly fine French print, engraved in the line manner from this gem. The plate, erroneously called the shield of Scipio, is a circular piece of silver, which was found in the Rhone, it represents in relief, Briseis being given to Achilles. Here is also a wrought golden heart, containing the heart of Anne, the celebrated Duchess of Bretagne, the wife of Charles the Eighth, and Louis the Twelfth of France. We examined with curiosity an Egyptian MS. on papyrus, brought from Thebes by Monsieur Denon: it was found in the hand of a mummy. Upon it are painted various human figures, birds, and hieroglyphic characters. There is in the same cabinet, a large polished black stone, brought from Babylon. The arrow-headed characters upon it resemble those found on fragments of stone in the ruins of Persepolis. Characters somewhat similar may be seen on the brick from Babylon, now in the British Museum.

We were much pleased with viewing the archives, so well preserved and arranged in the apartments adjoining La Sainte Chapelle. After seeing them, we paid our respects to the brave Monsieur ——, who, at the period of the Revolution, so valiantly preserved them from destruction at the hazard of his own life. During that fearful time, orders were given by the Revolutionists that the archives should be burnt. A party accordingly proceeded to La Sainte Chapelle to commence the work of destruction. Monsieur —— placed him-

self before the door, and bid them find their way through him. He braved the fury of the mob, and never quitted his constant and vigilant charge of the archives during that dreadful time of general destruction. Wonderful as it may seem, it is yet nevertheless true, that his firm courage and deliberate resolution succeeded in awing the mob, and in preserving these records of the kingdom.

La Sainte Chapelle is a most beautiful specimen of Gothic work. It is enriched with splendid painted glass. The windows are merely separated from each other by light shafts. The glass represents the life of St. Louis, the founder of the chapel, who erected this magnificent building as a receptacle for the relics he procured at Venice. Here are collected the papers of all the revolutionary processes. The trials of the unfortunate persons accused were very brief, their names being generally inserted in the condemned list before the victims were judged.

The Cathedral of Notre Dame bears no comparison, in point of beauty, with that of Rouen. The towers are low, and the architecture altogether heavy. The foundations are of great antiquity; and the church, before the Revolution, possessed many objects of interest which now no longer exist. Amongst them was the celebrated equestrian statue of Philippe de Valois, who, after a great victory, entered the church armed, on horseback, and here returned thanks for having achieved it. Philippe left as an offering his arms and his horse, which he afterwards bought of the church for an immense sum of money. A record, preserved in the archives of Chartres, informs us, that the chapter of that church assembled to determine, that the sum of one thousand francs should be paid by Philippe de Valois, to redeem the arms and horse which he had there presented, also as an

offering to the Virgin. From this record we learn, that the same ceremonies were performed on the occasion at Chartres, as at Notre Dame.

The first Christian church in Paris was erected on this spot, about the year 230. It was repaired by Childebert, the son of Clovis, in 522, and dedicated to Notre Dame. On the foundations of this building, the present cathedral was commenced, in the reign of Louis the Young, A. D. 1160, but was not finished till nearly two hundred years after.

In digging beneath the choir, in the last century, several curious engraved stones were found, ornamented with bas-reliefs; they were altars, dedicated to heathen gods. It is said, that, in the excavated parts of these stones, ashes of the sacrifice were found.

The church of St. Germain des Prez was by far the most curious religious edifice in Paris, before it shared the general destruction of the Revolution. It was built about the year 542, by King Childebert I. son of Clovis, at the request of St. Germain, on the site of a temple dedicated to Isis. The church was burnt, and rebuilt in 886; but the present building is of the eleventh century. The towers, from their construction, it is believed, were intended as a defence to the adjoining abbey, against the frequent incursions of the Normans. The portal was filled with curious figures, representing the kings and queens of France. Of these two now alone remain, first removed from their original station to the Museum of French Monuments, and lately thence to the Abbey of St. Denis. These figures, the French antiquaries have chosen to name Clovis and Clotilde.

In this church were interred, King Childebert I., founder of the Abbey, his wife Ultrogote, and St. Germain; also Chilperic, and

Fredegonde, Clotaire II. Bertrude, Childeric II. and Biltilde his wife. The tomb of Chilperic, although one of the most curious, did not contain his body. That prince was hated by his people: to avoid the insults of the populace, he was interred within the cloisters. His remains were discovered, during the last century, by some workmen, in digging. On a stone placed above them, these words were inscribed: — "*Hic jacet Chilpericus.*" Beneath, within the tomb, — "*Precor ego Chilpericus ne hinc offerantur ossa mea.*"

Before the sacking of the church at the Revolution, it contained many relics and riches; amongst them, a Gothic shrine of St. Germain, composed of silver gilt, enriched with one hundred and seventy precious stones, and above two hundred of the finest pearls, besides a vast quantity of ornaments of pure gold and silver. This shrine was presented to the abbey by William, Bishop of St. Germain, in the fourteenth century, who gave also a splendid altar of silver gilt, decorated with precious stones. Here, too, was a large silver cross, nearly covered with diamonds, emeralds, and other jewels. In the centre was placed an oriental sapphire, bearing a representation of the head of Hadrian. Another cross, said to be formed of the wood of the real cross, was magnificently enriched with jewels. I mention these treasures, to give you an idea of the splendid gifts the convents possessed before the Revolution.

I must not omit some mention of the ancient Palais des Thermes, built by Julian the Apostate, after the model of the baths of Dioclesian at Rome, in the year 358. This palace was long the residence of the early kings of France. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, L'Hotel de Cluny was erected on some part of the ruins of the ancient walls. Of the Roman

building, there now exists a chamber forty-two feet in height. In this palace the Duke of Bedford, while Regent of France, gave a splendid entertainment to above eight thousand persons, consisting of the knights, the clergy, the parliament, and the chief people of the city. In 1544, the remains of an aqueduct were discovered, which had been used to convey to the Palais des Thermes the waters of Arcueil.

Adieu; for I am obliged to leave writing somewhat abruptly. I think in this I have given you enough of the antiquities of Paris. My next letter will, I doubt not, treat of very different subjects.

LETTER V.

My dear ——, Paris, Hotel de Menars.

We last night visited Tivoli, the French Vauxhall; but, to my taste, in the arrangement of the grounds, a much prettier place. The gardens of Tivoli are agreeably diversified; and here you see the Parisians in all their gaiety. Bands of music play the most lively tunes, while throngs of the gay visitors dance quadrilles, or waltz in the open air. In one part of the gardens, a mountebank entertains you with tricks of legerdemain; in another are rope-dancers and fireworks. But the chief amusement and favourite attraction is, *Les Montagnes Russes*, a singular exercise, introduced into France after Napoleon's expedition to Russia, and perhaps the only thing he gained by it. I will describe this amusement as well as I am able, although I can convey but an imperfect idea of the velocity of motion with which you are whirled along. A sort of long inclined plane is erected, upon which is fixed an iron rail-way, exactly adapted to the wheels of the car that descends. From the summit of the declivity (which towards the top is very steep) the car is turned off, by merely shoving it forward, and it runs down with an inconceivable velocity. I can compare its motion to nothing but the idea of being shot from a gun. In descending, the car passes under some artificial rocks, that are illuminated; which, although far above the head, appear, in the velocity of the descent, as if they would dash out your brains. I do not know the exact distance you are carried in these cars; but I should

think about six or perhaps seven hundred feet: eleven seconds is the time occupied in the descent; and I hear it is computed the cars go at the rate of forty-eight miles within the hour.

You will, my dear ——, expect to hear I have been to some of the theatres, and went of course prepared to admire Talma, lest I should be suspected of not understanding French, or of having no taste for the sublime. — Talma performs at the *Theatre Français*. The French, I find, consider all decorations of their principal theatre as a thing quite unnecessary, although it seems more consistent with the purposes of elegant relaxation, that the house wherein it is sought should at least appear cheerful and handsome. The *Theatre Français* is any thing but this. It is larger than the Hay-market, and lighted by one solitary chandelier that hangs suspended from the roof. Imagine a dirty building, without taste or elegance in the decorations, with a clumsy row of thick columns all round the interior. Little wretched holes, called boxes, are filled with men and women in their ordinary attire; — the pit being appropriated to men alone. Before the stage hangs a shabby painted curtain. Suppose all this seen by a half-dingy light, and you have the *Theatre Français*, and will, perhaps, as I did, fancy it a prison, rather than a place devoted to amusement. The curtain arose, and a well-painted scene decorated the stage, which, according to the laws of the French drama, during the whole play was never changed. The actors were remarkably well dressed in the Greek costume. The tragedy performed was Racine's *Iphigénie en Aulide*. Talma played Achille. His voice is powerful, and he speaks articulately; but I cannot say I received the least pleasure from his performance. He is not an actor to my taste. England has of late produced many admirers of Talma, and the French stage: of

these some, doubtless, are affected; for, however bold the assertion may appear, I do not hesitate pronouncing, that the sincere admirer of the dramatic art, as it was in England in the school of Kemble and Mrs. Siddons, as it is in that of Kean, cannot receive much pleasure from French tragedians. Nature and art, dignity and bombast, are not more opposite to each other, than the English and French stage. Is acting an imitative art, or not? If it be such, that imitation which most truly and powerfully resembles nature must be the best. The passions of man, as they are affected or called forth by circumstance, sympathy, or feeling, constitute the actor's province for imitation. The author is the fabricator of a form, to which the actor gives life and vigour; —

> "To draw the num'rous vanities of man,
> And check their progress, is the poet's plan.
> Yet in faint tints his rising colours show,
> Till by the actor bolder taught to glow:
> His artful touches bid the picture live,
> And to the whole the stamp of nature give.
> He to our hearts more strongly makes appeal,
> And all the Author means, in him we feel."

In Kemble, the English stage possessed the living portraiture of all that was majestically great; while his excellent judgment, and classic taste gave an additional lustre to the poet he so nobly embodied. Kemble always appeared the hero of Corioli. To his acute mind, and just discrimination, we are indebted for those readings of Shakspeare which afford the best commentary to his works. In dignified declamation, Mrs. Siddons was without a rival. In terrific and appalling bursts of feeling, she was so inimitably excellent, that she possessed a *real* existence in the circumstances of the characters she represented. Such must

have been her gesture, her expression, and her voice. Shakspeare and Mrs. Siddons went hand in hand in embodying the passions of the soul. He drew his characters in materials capable of living fire. Siddons lighted up the train, and gave them in full effulgence to her auditors. Yet was her energy entirely free from all violence, or turgid declamation. It arose with the spontaneous feeling, or circumstance, incidental to the character, and never appeared but in that just measure which gave it force, from the propriety of its expression. At other times, she played with the easy and graceful familiarity that accompanies a great mind in the calmer scenes of life; while her voice, peculiar by its resemblance to speaking music, gave to her accents and deep pathos a harmony and beauty that constituted the poetry of her art. This organ of expression she managed so admirably, that, touch but the chord of passion, and it burst upon the ear, like the thunder of heaven, in tones of terrific grandeur.

Kean is so original, that he must not be judged by those rules applied by critics to the actor in general. His genius is alone the law of his mind, and constitutes all his excellence. There is so little of the artificial in his playing, that he seems always like a man busied in the events of his own life, and moves and speaks with the ease of an individual amongst his friends. It is this peculiar faculty in Kean which makes us forget the actor: we cease to consider him as such, and feel our esteem or detestation excited towards the man, as the events of the fable unfold the character he plays. The genius of Kean is as excursive as it is wild, and ranges through a wide territory, grasping the most opposite points: the malignity of his hatred appals the firmest mind, while the tenderness of his affection melts the gentlest heart. In the French theatre, our ears are stunned by a high, singing

pompous tone, that seems designed as a caricature of harmonious declamation. A French tragedian never speaks like a man off the stage, and conveys to us the idea that he intends poetry should have a delivery of its own, that does not in any manner resemble nature. In the intercourse of life, however dignified or humble, men do not *sing* their words, nor is a running cadence in one key the proper medium for poetical delivery. But the laws of nature are never violated with impunity. In whatever art her representation is attempted, that art must take herself as the model, or it loses its effect, and becomes ludicrous, from an extravagant attempt at that sublimity it cannot gain. When the French actors express strong passions, or animated feelings, they become, both in voice, action, and manner, absolutely furious, and often resemble a maniac in a violent fit of raving. Such acting appears to me to bear no analogy to any imitation of human passions. Such, perhaps, may be French feelings. I am sure they are by no means English.

The French actors, rave, rant, and "tear their parts to rags—to very tatters," without any modulation of voice, or abated violence of manner; storming on to the end of the scene. One actor of *celebrity*, not content with shaking his voice, and his head, (as if desirous of showing that, shake it as hard as he could, it would not fall off,) shook his hands, and even his knees too, and generally made his exit with the same extraordinary gesticulation. Clytemnestre appeared going into fits throughout the whole of her part. The least extravagant, and the most simple and pleasing performer, was Mademoiselle Bourgoin, who played Iphigénié. Whenever a French actor attempts unimpassioned declamation, he is so stiffly pompous, that he reminds us of the tawdry buckram, and bombast, of honest Mr. Bayes. Do what

he might, I much doubt if a French tragedian could excite one tear of sympathy — the best criterion, perhaps, of any actor's merit; for the heart demands no rules, and is involuntarily affected by natural pathos. But French pathos is a whining drawl, more insufferable than their loudest ravings; because it is both stupid and sleepy too.

When a whole people concur in giving praise to one actor above all the rest, we must conclude that actor possesses some superior qualities that gain such general approbation, and place him in so high a rank in his profession: and that Talma is far superior to all the other performers, is undoubtedly true; but Talma is of the *French school*, and is alone superior *in* that school. By Frenchmen, therefore, he must be judged, as he plays in their taste; but bring him to the ordeal of our *parterre*, and he would scarcely be endured. The laws of taste are, perhaps, more arbitrary than we are generally inclined to admit. There must be a standard of true excellence in all things, or where shall we seek for appeal. The wisest of the most enlightened times have concurred in the opinion, that true taste is founded on a just discrimination of nature, aided by that elegance of mind which discerns whatever is graceful and beautiful, and rejects all that is vulgar or deformed. The question then is, What constitutes the excellence of the tragic art? If the answer be, A just delineation of nature, selected by the judgment of the actor, in her most dignified and beautiful forms, the result is, that that school must be the best, where she is thus pourtrayed.

The farce that followed the play of *Iphigénie* compensated, in a great measure, for having sat so long, nearly suffocated with heat, to endure the extravagances of the tragedy. The subject was lively, and the characters admirably played; the humour

less broad than that generally exhibited on the English stage; and it had more of the simple and exquisite expression, which forms the distinguishing talent of our own inimitable Dowton. The French are excellent comedians. Comedy suits well with the national vivacity of their character and language, which, if I may venture an opinion, is by no means adapted to express the sublimity of the tragic muse. In works of fiction, in the sprightly turns of comedy, or a well-placed repartee, there is a delicacy and *finesse* peculiar in the very spirit and idiom of the French, in which the English may, perhaps, be deficient; but to this it is limited: here it ends. There is no majesty, no elevation, no harmonious march of sound, in the expressions of their language. In their poetry, the most striking image, or sublime thought, becomes, as it were, poor or humbled, by a weak or naked expression. The French have no taste for the productions of unshackled genius, particularly in works of the dramatic kind. The Greek tragedy is their model; and that tragedy was formed for the Grecian stage, which could not be adapted for change of scenery; a thing then totally unknown. The Roman theatre was conducted on the same plan; and we learn from a very curious and ancient copy of Terence (preserved in the library of the Vatican), and illustrated by rude drawings, that when it was necessary a house should be the scene, the frame of a door was placed on the stage to express it. The French, if they are so determined in their imitation of the ancients, might as well adopt this mode for their example; but, now when all is altered, when by the aid of machinery we can vary and shift the scene as often as we please, the French are stupid enough to tie themselves down to certain rigid rules, in observ-

ance of the unities; for no other reason, than because the Greeks did so, when the Greeks could not do otherwise.

That the tragedies of *Corneille*, *Racine*, and *Ducis*, possess considerable merit, is unquestionably true: but what are their best works, compared with those of our own transcendant Shakspeare? are they not, after his, poor, spiritless, and cold? In French tragedies, the heroes sometimes certainly utter very fine things: noble sentiments are given, and some bold images well pourtrayed; but in what manner? With an ostentatious parade, they are purposely given as *fine things*, and as such, they are paraded in a tragedy, like the life-guardsmen at Covent Garden, dressed up, but out of place, and look as awkward, as those gentry do in their Roman armour and wooden shields. How different is it with Shakspeare! All his sublime sentiments and noble descriptions are *incidental*, and form a part of each character, or of the whole action, as it passes on; while, suited to each little circumstance and time, he throws in, with a rich and masterly hand, the finest touches of nature, and the most minute observations and descriptions of her works. In what French tragedies shall we find this? and does not their verse destroy probability? for we cannot allow their plays are illusions, while their characters speak rhyme, which gives an unnatural air to all their tragedies. The French people can form no comparative judgment on this subject with us; the reason is obvious: a tolerable knowledge of their language, will enable us, without effort, to read and comprehend their *Corneille*, and *Racine;* but I much doubt if it is even possible for any Frenchman (unless brought up in England) to understand Shakspeare.

Some of the French talk of learning English, as a most difficult and almost insurmountable labour, — even as a thing not to

be acquired; yet those who can get through a newspaper with tolerable ease, talk as familiarly of Shakspeare, as if they really understood him. One of these pretending critics, who spoke broken English, and whose judgment was good, in books he could comprehend, was very liberally censuring our great poet the other day to me; and fixing on that passage in King John, where, suffering from the internal heat of the poison, the King exclaims,—

> " And none of you will bid the winter come
> To thrust his icy fingers in my maw;—"

ignorant that Shakspeare had the art of raising the meanest term of our language to a level, with the majesty of the idea he meant to convey the critic exclaimed, " *De maw! de maw! Ah que c'est vilain, c'est barbare! de maw is de part of de fowl's entrailles.*" And again, in that passage where Hotspur so emphacally apostrophizes honour,

> " By Heaven, methinks it were an easy leap,
> To pluck bright honour from the pale-fac'd moon,
> Or dive into the bottom of the deep,
> Where fathom-line could never touch the ground,
> And pluck up drowned honour by the locks."—

" *I very well understand, Madam, your Shakspeare,*" said the critic: " *I do know both English and French Shakspeare, by* " *Voltaire; but vat nonsense is here, to jomp to de moon* " *for honors, or to get up a dead woman drowned in bottom* " *of de sea, — to get her up by de ropes.*" Such is the manner in which Shakspeare is generally commented upon by French critics; and Mrs. Montague has proved, in her admirable essay on Shakspeare, that the remarks of Voltaire, and his *dicitonary* translation of our bard, were quite as absurd as the com-

prehension of my critic. Yet Frenchmen dare speak of our Shakspeare; they dare arraign a genius, whose equal their country never produced. In our language, too, Shakspeare found that scope in the copiousness and variety of our words and expressions, that is denied the French, by the poverty of theirs. Where they have but few terms to express an idea, we have fifty. They are ignorant of our obsolete expressions, of the majesty of style, and of that peculiar, and sometimes *inverted phraseology*, so marked and so noble in Shakspeare; nor can they possibly comprehend, that words used in common, or of mean application, become elevated, from the simple but forcible manner in which they are used to express a bold and imposing image. How is it then possible a Frenchman can comprehend, much less form a judgment, of Shakspeare? yet have I heard him impudently criticised by many. I fear I have tired your patience, and I have certainly wandered from my subject: you will forgive me, I trust, when you consider I have been induced to it by my veneration for a name so sacred to every English bosom. Adieu. We go to-morrow to the Louvre: you shall hear some account of it in my next.

We have been disappointed in our desire of seeing a play of Moliere's acted. None of his excellent comedies have yet been performed since we came here.

LETTER VI.

My dear ———, Paris, Hotel de Menars.

You ask me my opinion of the Parisians; but I would rather you should form your own, from what I shall relate, of things that have fallen within my observation. The Parisians are a people devoted to gaiety and pleasure: they are not only free from superstition, but have, I believe very little religion at all. We were surprised by finding so few persons attend mass at the cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris. In the country towns, the churches are thronged with people on the Sabbath-day: of these there are ten times more women than men; a proof, perhaps, that the softer sex are more credulous, and easily imposed upon; for nothing, surely, but extreme weakness, prejudice, or folly, can submit to the despotism of Catholic domination. Throughout France, the Sabbath-day (excepting during the hours of mass) is devoted to gaiety, more especially in Paris, where luxury is carried to a monstrous excess. It is the very seat of dissipation; art is exhausted in every gratification of sense; and the Palais Royale is the paradise of French enjoyment. Nor can I pass in silence the scenes it presents.

The structure of the Palais Royale was commenced by Cardinal de Richelieu in 1636: it is a stone building, in the form of a parallelogram; the architecture handsome, and much ornamented. The entrance is by the porticoes, into a large square, in the centre of which a fountain plays into a circular basin; walks intersect beds of shrubs, &c. &c.

At the death of the Cardinal, he bequeathed this palace to Louis XIII.; Louis XIV. gave it to his nephew, Philip of Orleans. At length it came into the possession of the infamous revolutionary Duke of Orleans, who was alike distinguished by his crimes, vices, and extravagance. His prodigality and ambition having greatly exhausted his finances, in order to raise a supply of money, he had recourse to his palace as the means; and, thinking it might aid the purposes of the Devil, devoted it to the service of the general enemy of mankind; had Doctor Porson been in the Palais Royale, he would certainly there have sent his infernal majesty to walk.* The lower apartments were divided, and let out for small shops, where jewellery, silks, books, china, glass, and almost every thing is sold.

In the Palais Royale also are *cafés* and *restaurateurs*; and, in the apartments under ground, there are *cavernes*,—a sort of coffee-houses, where, every evening, the lower orders resort. They have dancing, singing, drums beating, and a great variety of amusements. In one of these *cavernes*, a man, dressed like a savage, is employed to beat a drum, and attracts much notice and admiration. On the floor, above the shops, are the *salons*, where the gentry resort to eat ices, and drink coffee: one of them is so splendid, that I must not omit some description of it here; it is the celebrated *Café des Milles Colonnes*. You enter a room adorned by gilt columns, illuminated by chandeliers, decorated with artificial flowers; statues and brilliantly gilt ornaments are tastefully disposed; all sides of this apartment are filled with large looking-glasses, that reflect and lengthen the scene on

* Alluding to a humorous poem, by Professor Porson, entitled "the Devil's Walk."

every side, so that, at night, it is not unlike the idea we form of a fairy temple. Facing the entrance, seated upon the throne that once belonged to Murat appears a finely dressed lady, who takes the money, and dispenses her bows and smiles to the company. At the *Café des Milles Colonnes* many of the gay Parisians assemble, who never fail devoting a part of their evening to some place of public amusement, or to one of these *Cafés;* for French people have no idea of domestic and rational evenings at home; they would be devoured by *ennui*, were they obliged to endure them. If one day in the week is more devoted to pleasure than another, it is Sunday, when every dissipation is let loose, every fête given, and amusement encouraged. You will frequently on that day see the lower orders of people sitting on the outside of their doors, playing at cards in the street. As to morality or religion, I believe they but partially inhabit within the walls of Paris; and I much doubt if the Revolutionists had not done good in destroying so many nests of idleness and superstition in the monasteries and nunneries, if they had not done as much mischief by leaving the people no bridle whatever to their vices. A Parisian seems to live for the present hour, and for that *alone*; I cannot but think, if the thunder of Heaven were about to burst upon their heads, they would look up to the Power who sent it, and exclaim, "*Arrêtez nous n'avons pas encore fini la fête!*" Above the second range of apartments in the Palais Royale, I am told (for I did not see them), there are gaming rooms, where scenes of the most horrid extravagance and execration are carried on. Below, within the square, you meet constantly crowds of people, but more especially in the evening, who are lounging about, some seated upon chairs, others walking. You would imagine the whole

scene a great fair, or that an extraordinary exhibition attracted the multitude; but it is the same every day. The Boulevards, towards night, are thronged by thousands of persons, in search of the amusements that are there going on. Here also are *cafés*, and chairs to accommodate the company in the open air. In one part of the Boulevards, you are entertained by three or four voices, singing to the accompaniment of a harp, or some other instrument: many of these itinerant musicians perform with considerable skill. In another place there is conjuring. Sometimes a charlatan holds forth on the virtue of his medicines. A female professor of the order greatly amused us the other evening. She was seated upon a horse; about her arm she twisted a tame snake; and, with wonderful volubility and ease of expression, was expatiating upon the virtues of her *eau de Cologne*.

The Revolution, seems in a great measure, to have changed the French character; for far the greater part of the modern French appear to verify the observation of their countryman, "that they are a mixture of the tiger and the monkey." We have remarked a great difference between such, and those of the old regime,—men formed before the Revolution. These we find generally agreeable, polite, and well-informed gentlemen; but, in many of the younger classes, there is a degree of brutality, by no means consistent with that politeness we have so long been used to consider as a marked feature in the French character. There exists amongst them a spirit of vanity, that is most absurd. They still fancy themselves what they were in the time of Louis XIV., and think no people in Europe their equal. Did you credit a Frenchman, he would persuade you, the sun itself shines brighter in France, than in any other part of the globe. They are costly, and dirty,

poor, and prodigal; every thing in this country bespeaks a despotic government, all that belongs to the King is magnificent, to the greatest excess, and all that appertains to the people poor: the military usurps the civil power, their very pleasures are subordinate; in no place, even of amusement are they entirely free, in the theatres, in every public walk, the *gens d'armes* parade, and their will is the law. In France too, there are many existing parties, the friends of the Bourbons, the partisans of Napoleon, the democratic, and the aristocratic. Discontented as are many persons in England, would they change their situation with the French, who, exhausted by a long war, and disturbed by internal dissensions, have the presence of foreign troops, to awe them at home: miserable indeed is that nation, which owes its internal tranquillity to foreign intervention. The withdrawing these powers is spoken of, to save the charge of their support. but it is considered doubtful, if it proves an eventual good. The very character of the French makes them subject to change, and ready for revolt, they have no settled principles or government; they talk of liberty and glory, as we do of islands in the moon, by speculative theory; we see luminous spots, give them a name, but never fix their identity.

The French have the happy art of forgetting all things past, they would shout for the King to day, and for the Emperor tomorrow. You will perhaps imagine that I have heard much mention of Napoleon, Napoleon-le-Grand; no such thing, whenever I have hitherto made attempts to introduce him as a subject of conversation, they appeared unwilling to speak about him; not so much as a two-penny print have we seen of Napoleon in the shops. The public buildings he erected still remain, but all the inscriptions they bore, with his name, have been carefully

taken down, or erased. Yet has Napoleon still many friends, although the terror inspired by the *gens d'armes*, makes them hold their peace. Bonaparte was a proper man to govern such a people, a people according to their own phrase, so *volage;* in dazzling them with the pomp, and ostentation of the glory of the French arms, he kept them by external wars, from looking too closely at home. That the Emperor did this country infinite service, every impartial observer will admit, he served them both by his laudable institutions, his care and improvement of their agriculture, and his patronage of every liberal art. The savage spirit of Revolution he tamed, and taught the tiger to seek foreign, rather than civil devastation. The present government is considered, I believe, imprudent in its measures towards the military. Under Napoleon, the army were accustomed to licence and pillage, but when the King was restored to the throne, the scene changed; the soldier, who formerly lived freely, enjoyed his pleasures and his spoil, was now strictly confined within the most rigid rules of discipline instead of his old licence, and his service from the hope of gain, he was reduced to the mere pittance of his ordinary pay, and must rest content in his submission to these stricter rules without the prospect of conquest, as a means of bettering his condition. Such a change, made so *suddenly*, and without being led to it, by imperceptible and slow degrees, caused a great discontent in the army, who are still attached to him, under whom they enjoyed more licence and greater gain.

I cannot mention Napoleon, without adverting to one of his imputed greatest crimes, of which the circumstances have recently been powerfully impressed on my mind, by visiting the scene where was acted the death of the Duke D'Enghien, at the castle of Vincennes. The most guilty part of Napoleon's conduct towards

the Duke, cannot, perhaps, be charged to seizing him in a neutral territory, where he was plotting against the State, but to the very brief and unfair trial by which he was condemned. This castle is situated about three miles from Paris, it is a very fine building. The foundations were laid by Philip Augustus, A.D. 1183; Philip de Valois erected the towers in 1361; the building was completed by Charles V., the son of John king of France. Vincennes was the favourite residence of many of her kings. Joinville tells us, that the famous St. Louis was accustomed to sit beneath an oak tree in the forest, where poor persons who had suffered any grievance or oppression from the rich, had free access to him, and there he heard their complaints, and rendered justice to all. The towers of the castle stand somewhat apart from each other, but they are of lofty and noble dimensions, and mostly square in their form; the windows are of rich ornamented Gothic architecture, a thing not common in castles; there is without a draw-bridge and deep ditch, and a Gothic chapel and keep within the walls. The building is quite perfect externally, and the effect produced by the whole combination of the edifice is very imposing, and displays the magnificence of feudal times. A garrison is still kept at Vincennes. In the most remote and obscure part of the building, towards the wood, you cross a draw-bridge, and enter a small tower, and there it was that the unhappy Duke D'Enghien received judgment; he was hurried up the little winding staircase into a small dark room, where, after a few minutes occupied in the ceremony of a mock trial, (for just or equitable it could not be deemed,) he was judged and condemned. It was six in the evening when he arrived at Vincennes, and at two in the morning was he shot, at one corner of the ditch, placed with his back against a tower, at the base of which he fell. On this spot

a pyramid of marble is now erected, with the words *Hic cecidit* inscribed.

In the little room where the unfortunate Prince received condemnation, you now view the coffin containing his remains. It is covered by a white pall, ornamented with a cross wrought in gold. His sword, orders, &c. are placed upon it; likewise the immense stone that was found thrown upon the head of the victim, when the body was discovered buried in the ditch. The little room is hung with white and gold. An altar stands under the window, and mass is daily said for the repose of his soul. The bust of the duke is seen in an adjoining room. He was a very handsome man, thirty-two years old, and greatly beloved by all persons who were acquainted with his amiable qualities. I hear there is a very interesting account lately published of this affair, which mentions that the evening the duke was seized, he had been passing some part of it with a lady of rank to whom he was attached. On his return, his own house was forcibly entered by armed men. His domestics attempted resistance, in order to favour their master's escape. The duke was about to defend himself at the head of the stair-case, when his valet, probably from an affectation of love, threw his arms around his master, whom he rendered powerless by the act; and thus, perhaps treacherously, held him till he was dragged away by the ruffians. The lady hearing a noise in the street, looked from her window, and saw a man forcibly dragged along by soldiers, nor knew she, at the time, it was the unhappy duke her lover. When preparing for execution, it is said he begged some one about him to bear a chain of gold he wore round his neck to this lady, but no one consented to oblige a man who was surrounded, during his last moments, by the savage and blood-thirsty tools of power. I

tell you these circumstances, as I think them so interesting, more especially when speaking of Vincennes. But you are probably better acquainted with them than I am, as I have not seen the work in which they are fully detailed. When the body of the unfortunate victim was taken from the grave, into which it had been thrown, besides the stone upon the head, several ornaments, money, &c. were found with it, and the remains of the clothes the duke wore when he was shot. I cannot describe to you the feelings of horror inspired by a visit to this little tower, where so many local and still-existing circumstances seemed even yet to speak the act of midnight murder.

Leaving Vincennes we visited the abbey of St. Denis, whose rich and costly treasure was despoiled during the Revolution. A church had been originally erected upon the spot where the celebrated saint was interred; this was afterwards destroyed. King Dagobert, the first French Christian Prince, commenced another edifice in the year 630, which was finished by Charlemagne; this building was considerably augmented and decorated by the Abbé Suger and Saint Louis.

The abbey is of Gothic architecture; the proportions are light, noble, and elegant, but from the whole of the ancient painted glass having been destroyed by the Revolution, it is sadly wanting in that beautiful richness and sombre light which gives so much awe and venerable effect to Gothic buildings. In this abbey is the tomb of King Dagobert; the devices upon it are very curious, some of them represent devils carrying souls to hell in boats, and they are as grotesque in their character as the subjects portrayed. The tomb is not, however, of the time of Dagobert, to whose memory it is erected, but a work of Louis the Ninth. Here, likewise are many monuments of great

antiquity, lately brought from the Musée des Monumens Français, extremely interesting to the lover of curious research. The interruption of unexpected visitors obliges me abruptly to bid you adieu, I will write again, if possible, before we leave Paris, and shall not fail executing all the little commissions with which you have entrusted me. Mr. S. unites in kindest regards, and believe me ever,

Most affectionately yours, &c. &c.

LETTER VII.

MY DEAREST ——, Paris, Hotel de Menars.

I received your letter this morning, and am truly happy to find you are all well. Could you have known the anxiety I have suffered from your delay in writing, I am certain you would have spared me so much pain. Pray in future remember this, and reflect, that in another country so far removed from home, with no communication or means of hearing from my family, but by the post, how serious, how painful is the suspense of repeated expectation and disappointment, while the imagination, (always fertile when suspended between hope and fear,) raises a thousand chimeras, often worse than the certainty of evil,

> "For present fears are less than
> horrible imaginings."

Had *you* been prevented writing, I thought my brother surely might have sent me a letter, but I thank God you are all well, and would not have said so much on the subject, but to prevent a second recurrence of delay. Your letter ended all my apprehensions, and we set out this morning for Mont Martre, where we dined.

Mont Martre possesses much local interest from the recent scenes with which it is connected. The works thrown up by the French still remain, together with the ruined houses knocked to pieces during the late eventful time. The mount is a commanding military position, and the view of Paris from that spot is most

delightful, as the city appears to the greatest advantage. Tradition relates, that the ancients had a temple erected on this hill, to the gods Mars and Mercury, and that it was called *Mons Martis.* Saint Denis and his followers being brought here to worship those heathen deities, and refusing to do so, they were beheaded on the spot; in memory of the event it is conjectured from another etymology, that it derived the name *Mons Martyrum*, the Hill of Martyrs. St. Denis and his companions, after execution, did not choose to leave their mortal remains amongst heathens, and so tucking their heads under their arms, quietly walked off to a Christian lady, who possessed some land in the neighbourhood; the good lady received them very charitably, and took the pains to bury the headless saints, on that spot where the abbey of St. Denis was afterwards erected.

Whilst we were finishing our dinner at Mont Martre, a female came to the window of the inn with a basket, containing flowers and trinkets, that she offered us for sale. She held out the flowers to Mr. S. and begged of him to do two kind acts at one time; to serve her and oblige me, by purchasing her nosegay. The woman's manner evinced a mixture of archness and good-breeding that struck us both. Mr. S. took her flowers, and I offered her what remained of our dinner; she thanked me familiarly, and saying it would taste better in our presence, without more ceremony entered the room, courtesied, and seated herself at the table. All this was done with a rapidity and manner that could not be termed impertinent, for she seemed by her words to understand a compliance from our good nature, which would not allow her to think we could object. She complained of heat and thirst, I offered her some wine, and she drank it to

the health of those who deserved always to be happy, and, at the same time, bowed her head to us. While she was dining, she told us her history; — that her husband had been a soldier during the wars of Napoleon; he was killed in an engagement in Germany. A tear glistened in her eyes while she spoke; but she wiped it hastily away with her hand, and remarked, in a firm voice, that it was better to die for a great master than to live for a mean one. She had nothing left, —nothing but a little child: to support herself and her infant she now sold trinkets and nosegays; but she hoped never to be in absolute want, for God was good; flowers were beautiful; gentlemen loved to oblige charming ladies, and did not neglect her basket: saying this, she arose, bowed to Mr. S. and myself, and took her leave with the air of a court lady. Her thanks for our little attention to her were gracious, but not humble; she implied by them that she had received a kindness, but not a favour; a kindness every human being had a right to expect from another, and not as if it had been offered by a superior to an inferior. Her manner interested us so much, that I wished to know something more of her, but she seemed little desirous we should; for when I asked her where she lived, she answered, " In the world, as you " do, but my home is where chance or Heaven direct." Such a trifling incident would have afforded ample scope for the pen of the inimitable Sterne, whose French pictures are drawn with a fidelity and characteristic nature unequalled by any other writer. It is surprising what courtesy of address some of the lower orders of the French possess. Whilst you are dining at a restaurateur, or at an inn, women frequently come into the room with their baskets: sometimes they play and sing to you during your repast, without asking permission. Those who

carry baskets, although they torment you till you purchase some trifle to get rid of their intrusion, yet they do it in a manner so flattering and civil, you can hardly feel offended; for in Paris the lower orders are more polished than in London: the women who sell fruit frequently sit with a book before them, devoting to mental occupation the time not employed in their traffic.

But I must here remark, that, amongst the higher orders, the French ladies are not generally so well educated as the English, nor do they possess the solid and amiable qualities that render our countrywomen so universally esteemed. A Frenchwoman is a coquette from her birth: all she does is with a design to please you, and to attract your notice; yet she is easily in her turn pleased, and is more affable than we are. An Englishwoman receives every civility from a stranger as her right; while a French lady thanks you, accepts it in the most obliging terms, and seems grateful for the attention.

Between this country and our own a great difference exists in education. Young ladies, in England, are brought up with more reserve than they are in France, and are early taught to "reverence themselves." Till an English girl is introduced into the world, her time is occupied in acquiring solid or elegant accomplishments; and her society is chiefly that of her instructors or family: but in France they mix with general society at a much earlier age; nor have they the example of strict morality and reserve to curb the natural vivacity of their character. What, therefore, would be indecorous and even immodest in an English woman, is considered nothing in a French lady. It may be presumed that this neglect of decorum in their manners leads to many vices and much evil; for the mind gradually loses a sense

and perception of delicacy and virtuous conduct, when it is habitually accustomed to levity; and we soon cease to respect that woman who forgets to respect herself.

I must not omit some mention of a spot we visited yesterday evening, possessing much interest for its singularity, and the pleasing sentiment it conveys. The Jardin de Père la Chaise. On a hill without the town, this place of burial is situated, where are hundreds of monuments. They consist chiefly of white marble, and many are decorated with various and elegant devices. Here too are placed, in a picturesque manner, a variety of trees that in some places surround the tombs. Each grave has a little garden around it, which is kept in the nicest order by the surviving relatives of the deceased, who water the flowers, and hang garlands on the sculptured stone. I visited with veneration the spot where rest the mortal remains of Moliere and La Fontaine. The celebrated actress Raucourt is buried here. Her bust is placed upon her tomb. The expression of her countenance is remarkable for majesty and sweetness. Winding down the hill, the monument of Abelard and Eloisa meets the view, where, under a lofty and elegant Gothic canopy, lie in a praying attitude the effigies of these distinguished lovers. This monument, together with the ashes of the deceased, is said to have been removed to Paris by order of Napoleon; but the whole appears to be one of those combinations which Monsieur Le Noir is so fond of displaying, at the expense of truth, in the Musée des Monumens Français.

The view of the city from this cemetery is very delightful; and the order in which it is kept highly creditable to that veneration due to the memory of departed relatives and friends.

Every thing combines to inspire the most pleasing melancholy reflections. But we will now be like the French. Pause but a moment, and, in almost the same breath, leave the serious for the gay. We will go to the Opera of Œdipe, and the Ballet of Psyché, where the lovers of fine music may receive the greatest pleasure sublime harmony can inspire, You must not judge of the Opera in Paris by that of London. It will admit of no comparison, so much superior is that of L'Académie de Musique. The most admirable taste, judgment, and classic arrangement is displayed in the scenery, dresses, and decorations. The procession to the Temple of the Oracle in Œdipe was entirely copied from the antique, the statues, buildings, and ornaments corresponding. So excellent was the illusion, that it seemed as if ancient Greece had revived. Could the statue of Homer have been animated, it would not have surpassed the figure, and fine expression of Derevis, who represented Œdipe when old and blind. His daughter Antigone appeared with the simple majesty of Grecian beauty. The vocal and instrumental parts were so admirably managed, that they seemed all united, and produced an effect as if their combined harmony proceeded from one organ of sound. Lays, Derevis, and Nouris, are excellent singers. Derevis also possesses great merit as an actor. The ballet of Psyché exhibited fine dancing. During the piece, Psyché is seized by devils, for attempting the destruction of Cupid. She is carried to the infernal regions, and thrown down into a gulph of fire, where you see her tormented by fiends. Two different scenes of hell were presented, so horribly expressive, that I can well believe many persons could not behold them without shuddering. The Fates were characteristically in-

troduced. A very handsome youth played Cupid, dressed after the antique, and appeared a most charming model of animated beauty: his form was elegant, and his motions so light and graceful, that he seemed to walk on air.

I had nearly forgotten to tell you, that we have been to Le Jardin des Plantes. I do not recollect ever having seen any place of a similar kind so agreeable. There are above seven thousand botanical plants in these gardens, foreign trees, shrubs, &c. They also possess a very fine collection of fossil and mineral productions, and many living animals and wild beasts. Amongst them, two bears parade about at their pleasure, in a sort of enclosed pit. We were greatly interested by the school of comparative anatomy, where are preserved skeletons of every animal, beginning with the elephant and the whale. There are likewise many admirable models in wax of the different internal parts of the human body, coloured after nature, and so well done, that I could not look upon them without an unpleasant feeling of nausea and disgust. There is also a cast from a model of the Hottentot Venus, taken after her death. It is a most degrading picture of debased human nature, approximating towards the monkey. Le Jardin des Plantes appears to me not only a very agreeable, but instructive place of resort.

We will now turn to the Musée des Monumens Français. A collection of tombs brought together from their several original stations by Monsieur Le Noir: a great part of them are now removing to the Cathedral of St. Denis. The French are very fond of assigning every fragment they possess to the remotest antiquity; and Monsieur Le Noir boasts of having in this collection the effigies of Kings Pepin, Carloman, Hugh

Capet, and many others of that race of monarchs; but, on exa. mination, we find they are as like to each other as brothers. The truth is, all this batch of royal personages is the manufacture of the reign of Louis the Ninth, and have no claim whatever to originality or truth.

On entering the Hall of the Fourteenth Century, we expect to see the memorials of the illustrious opponents of our Edward the Third and his gallant son; but instead of them we find the room stuck round with plaster casts, all made out of the same mould, only diversified by the ornaments of the sword-belts, and the bearings on their shields. The sole exception to this, is the tomb and effigy of Bertrand du Gueselin. There are, likewise, many whimsical and ingenious fancies of M. Le Noir displayed, by putting together various parts of different figurer and ornaments that originally had no relation whatever.

When M. Le Noir considered this collection of tombs superior to ours in Westminster-Abbey, he surely must have forgotten the principal and most essential difference that exists between them, the local interest, and long-remembered identity of their station. In Westminster-Abbey, consecrated by time, and venerable from antiquity, we view the monumental trophies of our Edwards and our Henries, marking the very spot where their mortal remains have so long reposed, even since the hour of their interment. The sentiment, the interest inspired by such reminiscences, is entirely destroyed in M. Le Noir's collection, from the circumstance of the French monuments having been removed from their original destination, and we feel no more affected in viewing them, than we should be in walking through the gallery of a statuary, filled with things that have no historical or sentimental interest. Notwithstanding this, every praise is

due to M. Le Noir, for having preserved these remains from total destruction. But he must not attempt to persuade us they are more interesting in his gallery, than in the cathedrals and churches to which they belonged; or that such a combination is superior to our sepulchral trophies in the Abbey.

LETTER VIII.

My dear ——, Paris, Hotel de Menars.

We are just returned from a long walk. Our object was a visit to the Champ de Mars, so celebrated for being the spot on which Bonaparte delivered his addresses to the soldiers. It is situated near the fine Hospital of Invalids; a military school faces the field. We returned to Paris over the bridge of Jena, a short distance from the Thuilleries. The walk thence is very agreeable. Since I wrote to you last, we have been to Versailles; this celebrated Palace, situated 16 miles from the metropolis, is a building of great magnitude, much admired for its architecture. The entrance from the town is not handsome, being built of red brick; but the noble façade towards the garden presents an object at once beautiful and magnificent. This palace was erected by the costly Louis XIV. Much of the wealth it formerly possessed has been removed; I saw no furniture in any of the apartments which were shown to us: in one of the saloons may be seen a fine picture by Paul Veronese, representing our Saviour at the house of Simon the Pharisee; with the exception of this, and another by the same great master, all the paintings of Versailles are bad; the productions of the old French school, *Coypel*, *Le Brun*, &c. The apartments are decorated with rich gildings, but by no means in an elegant taste: the painted ceilings are indifferently executed; so that, on the whole, the rooms are more gaudy than beautiful. We saw the fine marble staircase, where the guard de corps was murdered, while the

unfortunate Queen Marie Antoinette made her escape to another part of the house. The gardens are of the time of Louis XIV., and extremely magnificent, but I dislike the stiff manner in which the trees are generally cut; still there are some very charming avenues, not deformed by art. The immense number and diversity of statues, vases, terraces, fountains, trees, avenues, and flowering shrubs, together with the noble palace, present to the view a combination of imposing objects, worthy a kingly residence. Of the fountains at Versailles (remarkable for their number and beauty) the finest is perhaps that of Latona; it is a raised oval work, executed in stone and marble; Latona stands on the top; beneath are her children, Diana and Apollo, and seventy-four figures, representing the peasants of Lybia changed into frogs by Jupiter, at the request of Latona; some of them are half, and others entirely metamorphosed. These figures overwhelm Latona with their showers; the waters rushing all around, and sparkling in the sun, produce the most beautiful effect that can be conceived. There is another very grand fountain in the centre of a canal; Neptune seated in a car, guiding his foaming horses, preceded by dolphins and sea nymphs. Versailles, with all its magnificent display, is to my mind wanting in the more pleasing and attractive graces of wild uncultivated nature. This feeling for the luxuriant beauty of hanging woods and picturesque landscape, induces me so much to prefer and admire St. Cloud, the favourite residence of Napoleon, situated but five miles from Paris, on the banks of the Seine. The woods that overhang its steeps, bear the same character of wild and luxuriant beauty, that you so much admired when we rambled together through those of Piercefield, in Monmouthshire. After winding through thick forest trees, you arrive at an eminence, where the good taste of Napoleon

erected a pedestal, on the top of which is placed a model, I believe, of the lantern of Demosthenes. From this spot you have an entire view of the city, the serpentine windings of the Seine, the chateaux that crowd its banks, the woods of Sevre, the picturesque stone-bridge, and the adjacent country, form a most delightful scene, not unlike an Italian landscape. Descending towards the palace, a cascade and fountain meets the view: the cascade rushes down from three separate sources, in the midst of flowering shrubs, and falls into a large basin beneath.

You enter the palace near this spot; in describing it I can convey to you no adequate idea of the taste, elegance, and magnificence of the interior. It seemed as if wealth, and every art, had been exhausted in rendering this palace costly and beautiful. Gold, silver, tapestry, and damask tire the eye by their rapid succession, till you are at a loss to decide which of the numerous apartments is the most sumptuous. One chamber, where the Emperor received his court, is entirely hung with richly worked crimson velvet, embroidered with the finest Greek ornaments in gold; the furniture corresponding in magnificent adornment. The tables are of beautiful mosaic work, composed of the most rare marbles. The suspended glass chandeliers are so exquisitely cut and brilliant, that they resemble chrystal; their ornaments being intermixed with little Or molu devices. The bed-chamber of Marie Louise, reminded me of an habitation of genii, described in the Arabian Nights. Her bed is of the richest brocade, worked with flowers on a ground of gold. The canopy above, ornamented with gold and white ostrich plumes. Yet was the splendour even of this apartment exceeded by that of her boudoir, in which the chairs are supported by admirably carved white swans, with golden collars about their necks; the

seats and furniture of white satin, embroidered with groups of flowers after Nature, so delightfully executed, that, viewed at a little distance, they seemed her own works. The walls are beautifully painted in arabesque. The curtains and draperies of light white silk, embroidered with a border of flowers in festoons. The chamber of the King is extremely magnificent. The ornaments of the bed are covered with as much gold as could possibly be introduced: but this splendid couch is of little use to its royal possessor, whose pains are never assuaged by resting beneath his gilded canopy; for the infirmities of the gout, (which pays as little deference to royalty as death does to the doctor,) prevents his raising his limbs to get into bed. A very low bedstead, partly constructed of iron, is therefore stationed in this chamber, upon which his present Majesty sleeps whenever he visits St. Cloud.

In another apartment, there is a large pier-glass placed over a chimney-piece; by touching a spring the looking-glass disappears, and a view of the country is seen through one entire plate of glass, that cost I know not how many hundred francs. The chamber where the Emperor dined, is, I am told, constructed after the model of a Roman room. The decorations are simple, but extremely elegant and tasteful. This costly palace was fitted up and furnished under the direction of Napoleon, who seldom slept in the fine rooms he so splendidly adorned. His own chamber, arranged in the most simple manner, he selected among the plainest above these apartments. It is probable he valued his magnificence only as it impressed the minds of others, without receiving any satisfaction from it himself; well knowing the power acquired by dazzling the eyes of the weak-minded multitude, and that majesty is approached with

greater veneration, when encompassed by surrounding objects of pomp.

One cannot visit this palace without reflecting upon the past and present condition of its late august inhabitant; he, before whom nations and princes bowed the knee; who, like Alexander, found in a world scarcely scope enough for his ambition, is now the solitary tenant of an insulated rock. But the transitions of human life are frequently as extreme as they are various, and thus did the unfortunate Queen, Marie Antoinette, exchange the palace of Versailles for the wretched Conciergerie, a prison, in the most dismal and abject sense of the word.

We obtained an order to see it: you pass into the interior by a large iron door, and through a dark passage, dimly lighted by a suspended lamp. On each side, within iron bars, resembling the dens of wild beasts, a few miserable prisoners were confined. You then entered *La Chapelle Expiatoire*, once the cell of Marie Antoinette, and here it was the poor Queen suffered all the united miseries of insult, cruelty, and imprisonment. In a little dark stone room, with only sufficient light admitted to display the horrors of the place, that unhappy princess, who, but a short interval before, enjoyed the state, luxuries, and adulations of a court, was confined, denied even the necessary comforts and decencies of life. Her bed was placed in one corner of the room, and close to it a screen, over which the four soldiers (who were kept both night and day in her apartment) could, at any time they pleased, observe her. How shocking, how disgraceful a cruelty, so repulsive to every feeling of common decency and humanity.

How few, who bask in the sunshine of royal prosperity, adulated by minion lords, and the reptile parasites of a court,

till they fancy themselves like the Deity, whose power they imitate! How few give one moment's reflection to the sufferings and miseries of their more lowly, but still their fellow-beings! The single dwelling of one day in a dungeon, would be to princes a useful lesson: like Jaques, they might learn to feel the common "penalty of Adam," and exclaim, with Lear,

> "Take physic, pomp,
> Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
> That thou may'st shake the superflux to them,
> And show the Heavens more just."

In a similar prison in the Conciergerie, the amiable Princess Elizabeth was likewise confined. Adjoining to it is a dungeon, *without light*, and secured by an iron door, where that excellent woman was shut up for several hours, during some period of her imprisonment. The wretched cell of Marie Antoinette is now converted into *La Chapelle Expiatoire*; mass is there daily said for the repose of her soul.

The present Duchess d'Angouleme apparently bears a constant remembrance both of her own sufferings and those of her parents, and looks with but little cordiality upon the people; for which she is blamed by the French, and even disliked by many of those who are the well-wishers of her family. An old Abbé was speaking on this subject the other day, and severely censured the Duchess for her contempt of the populace. He related an historical anecdote, the example of which, he said, she would do well to imitate.

"A French *Duke* of the royal blood, in times past, whose father was murdered by the populace, after various events, succeeded to the throne. While showing, on some occasion, a con-

descension to the people, a courtier reminded him, that *they* had been the murderers of his father. The prince replied, "Those times are past, and it becomes the *King* to forget the injuries of the *Duke*." For my own part, I am disposed to esteem the Duchess for the contempt she evinces towards the populace. No adulation, no applause of the multitude, can ever cancel, in a feeling mind, the remembrance of their former cruelties. The same city which now shouts for the House of Bourbon, but a few years since endeavoured its extirpation. So powerful is the remembrance of their sufferings, in the present royal family, that I hear they never pass that spot where the King and Queen of France were beheaded.

The temple in which the unfortunate Bourbons were confined, and where Captain Wright was murdered, is now converted into a convent, a Princess of Condé is the superior of the order.

We have visited the Louvre, and regretted you were not with us to share the pleasure we received. Perhaps you fancy I am (according to the fashion of the day) about describing the pictures in the technical phraseology of the modern critic and sagacious amateur. Chiaro-oscuro, silver tones, keeping, harmony, and warmth of colour, fine combinations of light and shade, &c. &c. are such common words, and so fluently discussed by every pretender who rings the changes in eloquent harangues upon the fine arts, that they are generally adopted to conceal real ignorance, and a total want of feeling and judgment. How learnedly do the connoisseurs descant upon a picture that bears its own value and importance, from the name of the artist who executed it. But place before one of these self-efficient judges a *nameless* picture of the greatest merit, and they would appear as worthy of

the cap and bells, as the deaf lord, who had a mind to turn opera amateur, but who, one night, chancing to miss the old Italian who used to jog his elbow that he might call "Bravo!" in the right place, most unfortunately bestowed his plaudits out of rule, and dozed over the sweetest harmony in the piece. Fine statues, and charming pictures, although very delightful objects, and affording infinite gratification to the lovers of art, can never be well described, and make but dull subjects for a letter. Could I, by telling you such or such statues were very expressive and beautiful, convey to your *eye* any adequate idea of what they really were, I would attempt a long and particular detail; but as this is impossible, I shall make only a brief mention of the whole.

You enter the Louvre by the lower splendid apartments. These are decorated with marble columns, the ceilings painted and gilt. Here are placed a large collection of very beautiful antique statues, altars, &c. The manner of their arrangement is extremely elegant and tasteful. Leaving these rooms, you ascend the great staircase, and enter the picture-gallery. The first view of it is very striking; for the gallery is said to be one quarter of a mile in length: the ceiling ornamented and gilt. On each side the apartment, the pictures are arranged. The direction in which the light falls upon them is so extremely bad, that many are scarcely seen. Several, by the ancient masters, possess the greatest beauty. The sight of these makes us the more regret the removal of the pictures that have been restored to their original possessors since the peace, when we see their places filled by productions of the old French school, in the time of Louis XIV. The celebrated paintings by Rubens, representing the principal events of the life of Mary de Medicis, and

Henry IV. are placed, in succession. They rank amongst the finest works in this collection, and excite both wonder and admiration. They may be justly considered some of the best productions of so great a master. As you enter, a picture of prodigious size attracts the eye. It is the Marriage of Cana, by Paul Veronese. The contemplation of this grand and imposing subject affords so much gratification, that we feel our admiration of so noble an art as painting increased by viewing it. To name but half the paintings, and to praise all deserving applause, would be indeed a laborious task. There are some exquisite productions by Correggio, Leonardo da Vinci, and Raphael. One picture, by the last inimitable master, is of such beauty, that it could not be imagined or described: the subject, a Holy Family. The Virgin, the infant Jesus, and St. John, are so painted, that you may dwell upon the groupe, till you fancy they are living nature.

We have seen two paintings, in Paris, by David: one representing Leonidas preparing for his expedition; and the other, the war between the Romans and the Sabines terminated by the interference of the Roman matrons, with their children in their arms. This last picture is remarkable for fine drawing and composition.

I must now bid you adieu; for we are going to the Royal Library, where Mr. S—— has engaged to show me some very curious MSS. Pray let me hear from you every opportunity; and when you see Miss——, say to her, that she mistakes in thinking I neglect her; but my time has been so fully occupied during our residence in Paris, that I have not been able to write to many friends who I promised should hear from me. At Bayeux, I shall find

more leisure. Thence I will certainly write to her. In the interval I have no professions to offer; for she knows I love her, and that includes all the rest, and is worth a thousand cold-hearted mockeries of affection, the small current coin of yesterday friendships that say much, and mean nothing. Adieu.

LETTER IX.

My dear ——— Bayeux.

I know not by what delay, or from what cause your last very kind letter failed to reach me, until two days previous to our leaving Paris. I was then so much hurried, that I had not a moment's leisure for writing, or yours would have been answered ere we quitted that city.

I am now at Bayeux, where it is probable we shall remain some time. You are anxious to learn if my health is improved by travelling; where we have been; and what has interested us during the route. We left Paris at five in the morning of the 8th instant, passed through Neuilly and St. Germain. The last-mentioned town has a large forest in its vicinity.

While we were passing St. Germain, Mr. S—— told me, that during a former visit to France, he had made an excursion from Paris thither, and, enquiring for the ruined priory of Ennemont, he was informed it might be seen from the garden of a *Bourgeois Anglais*. With some curiosity to see what sort of being the French termed a *Bourgeois Anglais*, he proceeded to the house. His knocking at the door was roughly answered, by an enquiry of what he wanted from the master; who, upon perceiving Mr. S—— was an Englishman, immediately broke out into a welcome given in broad Scotch. He shook him heartily by the hand, and insisted he should come in, and take some refreshment. In

the course of conversation, he mentioned many particulars relating to his own history. He had left England thirty years since, in the household of the Duke of Orleans. On the death of that nobleman he was thrown into prison; but the Revolutionists, considering he might be made useful (for some purpose he did not name), liberated him. He spoke with horror of the barbarity of the times, and particularly mentioned, that the people became so accustomed to blood, that public executions were considered as spectacles of diversion; but if two or three persons only were to suffer, the sight was deemed not worth notice, or the trouble of going to see it. This Scotsman had subsequently been employed in the household of the Emperor, who was partial to British servants. He spoke of Napoleon honourably, and declared he was extremely beloved by all about him, and that he never suffered the slightest injustice to any of his household. Every member of it had free access to complain of an injury, or seek redress from their master: he instanced this by stating, that some domestic had excited the envy or dislike of his fellows, who conspired in endeavouring his removal. As the dislike of these persons was a grievance Napoleon could not remedy, he removed the man himself, but gave him another post not less profitable than his former occupation. Josephine, he said, was beloved and esteemed for her amiable character and manners. He had remarked that the Emperor seemed to fear assassination; as the room in which he slept was never known an hour before he retired to rest, and that whenever he sat in the box of his private theatre, at any of his palaces, he was always attended by the captain of the guard. The Caledonian complained bitterly of the Prussians, who, although they knew he was a Briton, had pillaged his

house, and emptied the cellars of his wine, during the time they were at St. Germain.

I must now return to our journey. We continued our route through Poissy, and arrived afterwards at Mantes. We employed the short time during which the horses rested there, in viewing the town and cathedral. Mantes is celebrated for having been the scene of a memorable action. In 1087, William Duke of Normandy (in revenge for a pleasantry of the King of France, that tended to deride the Duke) besieged Mantes, and put all the inhabitants to the sword; he burnt the churches, and cathedral of Notre Dame. History relates, that the wind being high blew the flames in all directions, and so frighted the horse the conqueror rode, that he was thrown, and received a hurt, of which he afterwards died, at the little village of Hermentruville near Rouen. The present beautiful cathedral was commenced building under the auspices of Blanche de Castille, mother, and Marguerite de Provence, wife, of the holy Louis IX.

We continued our journey towards Vernon, through woods and valleys, beneath hills and overhanging rocks, that frequently reminded me of the fine valleys of South Wales. Vernon is a town most beautifully situated, and extremely picturesque from its chateau and adjacent scenery. Thence we proceeded on our route by Gaillon, stopt at Louviers, where we dined, and after our repast, amused ourselves with viewing the rich Gothic church that exhibits so much curious painted glass. The land in this part of France is very fertile, abounding in vineyards and corn-fields. Vineyards in Normandy are not common; these were the first we had seen, and, I find, the vine does not grow so luxuriantly here as towards the South of France.

The vineyards I have seen are by no means picturesque. The bines run on poles, like hops, but not higher than three feet.

We quitted Louviers, and arrived at Evreux, where we remained three days. Evreux is the Mediolanum of Ptolemy. The cathedral of Notre Dame was erected by Henry I., of England, in 1119; but the present building is at least two hundred years later. It is a most beautiful structure; the windows are filled by a rich and brilliant diversity of painted glass. Formerly there appeared in the glass, the whole length figures of Charles II. and Charles III. kings of Navarre; as they no longer exist, it is probable they were destroyed during the Revolution. The only interesting figures now remaining are those of a knight and his lady of the noble family of Harcourt, the surcoat of the former, and the robe of the latter, emblazoned with the arms of that house; above them may be traced this beginning of an inscription: "*Monsegneur Guillaume Harecourt, segneur de la Cauchoie, et Madame Blanche* * * * * The architecture of the building is Gothic, and extremely elegant in its ornaments and devices. Whilst we were in the cathedral, we observed a Brother of Charity who stood near us; a part of his dress was remarkable, and interesting to those who are fond of tracing ancient customs. This part consisted of a blue circular cap, ornamented with silver, in form somewhat resembling those worn by the blue-coat boys; it hung pendant over the shoulder by a long band that fell in front. This head-dress was universally worn from the latter part of the 14th to the end of the 15th century; it was called a *chaperon*, and the part depending the *tippet*. The best picture of our Henry the Fourth, preserved at Kensington, represents him in such a dress. This cap is still distinguished

at Evreux by the name of *Chaperon*; but the use of it, as a covering of the head, is now unknown, even to those who at present bear it.

When we came to Evreux, it chanced to be the last day of the fair. I was much amused with the motley groupes that frequented it, and with the extraordinary gestures of a grimacier, who seemed the delight of his numerous auditors. He was a little old man, not unlike Le Sage's descriptive picture of *Le Diable Boiteux*. He wore a dress of white linen, and a red cap: by the aid of a very large pair of spectacles, and having no teeth, he varied and distorted his features into so many forms, that they did not twice appear as belonging to the same countenance. The French peasantry are very fond of such disgusting exhibitions. Buffoons and charlatans are more common in France than in England, and so indeed are idlers and impostors of all kinds. The beggars are without number; they are bold, insolent, and importunate: you are followed, and sometimes absolutely beset by more than eight or ten at a time. When we were going into the court-yard of an inn at Magny, in our road to Paris, the doorway was filled by mendicants; one man, a most dreadful deformity of nature, was seated upon an ass, begging of every person who passed by. Frequently has the stump of a hand been actually thrust in my face. A beggar once seized me by the arm, demanded money, and was ascending the stairs to follow me into my chamber, till I got rid of her, by yielding a trifle to her importunity, with which she seemed dissatisfied because it was not a franc. The most horrid exhibitions are continually displayed, of disease, unnatural distortions, and deformities of the human body. The number and frequency of such objects is truly astonishing,

I never saw so many, or such shocking deformities in England as I have witnessed in France. We proceeded from Evreux to Lisieux, a romantic town, situated in a picturesque valley. There we remained a day, to repose from our fatigue, and to view the cathedral, parish churches, &c. The former is a plain building; the interior exhibits that dilapidated appearance, the certain mark of revolutionary destruction.

We went from Lisieux to Caen in the diligence. Amongst our fellow travellers were two strolling players, completely French characters. Their dress proclaimed poverty; but really French *gentlemen* travel in such very shabby attire, and in the provinces, frequently wear such old and mean apparel, that it is difficult to judge of their rank or fortune by their appearance. Our players, notwithstanding their thread-bare dress and hungry mien, were still stage-princes of ideal grandeur: they had much of the pompous manner of mock royalty, and talked of all things in a high strain. With a surprising vivacity and volubility, they sung duets, spouted, ranted, imitated Talma, and recited their parts in rapid succession, till they fairly tired themselves out, and fell fast asleep. I am inclined to believe, from observation, that the generality of the French are little affected by untoward circumstances; they seem to enjoy the pleasures of to-day, without "taking thought for the morrow." Poverty, an evil so heavily borne, sits light upon a Frenchman's heart: he will not smile the less if ruin stares him in the face; and I much doubt, were he deprived of his last sous, if it would abate one sally of his natural vivacity. However philosophic such a temper of mind may really be, I imagine it arises rather from the natural levity of character, inherent in the people, than from the fortitude of stoicism; perhaps they act more consistently with the nature of

our being. Severe are the ills of this life; but their duration is short, and it is undoubtedly a right exertion of the mind, when evils are inevitable, to meet them with that measure of fortitude which prevents their destroying our happiness, or embittering the ephemeral date of our sublunary existence. The Frenchman, who styles his old ragged jacket *robe de convenance*, or fiddles in a jail, may be as good a philosopher as the man who sneaks from you to hide an old coat, or sits pining in a stone cell, and, after all, may be as wise as any of us.

We parted with our gay travellers at Caen, and took up our quarters at the excellent Hotel D'Angleterre. Caen, the capital of Lower Normandy, is situated in the middle of a flat plain, on the river Orne, a large clean town, handsome, commodious, and well built: it contains twelve parishes, and above sixty streets. The university of Caen was founded by John, Duke of Bedford, by the authority of Henry VI. of England, in the year 1411. The charter was renewed by Charles VII. of France in 1452. Before the Revolution, there were nearly twenty convents in Caen, and a college of Jesuits. When William Duke of Normandy was about to marry Matilda, niece of Henry I. of France, some distinguished persons murmured at the purposed alliance, saying, they were too nearly related by their mutual descent from Richard, grandfather of William. Pope Victor granted them a dispensation, on condition that they would found two abbeys; one dedicated to St. Stephen, and the other to the Holy Trinity. The first now called *L'Abbaie aux Hommes*, was erected by the Conqueror, who died, and was buried within the church he built, in 1087: his tomb was erected at the cost of William Rufus, and richly decorated with gold, silver, and jewels, under the direction of Odo, a goldsmith of Caen. The tomb was supported on each

side by three pilasters of white marble. This monument was destroyed during the wars of the Hugonots. What remains of the Conqueror's bones, are still preserved in St. Stephen's; they rest under a flat stone in the choir of the church. There is a very interesting account given of the destruction of the tomb by Charles de Bourgueville, Sieur de Bras, a French writer, who witnessed the event. He tells us, that two magnificent monuments, of Duke William, and his Duchess Matilda, were broken to pieces by the rabble, one being in the *Abbaie aux Hommes*, and the other in the *Abbaie aux Dames*. The Hugonots, believing the tomb of the Conqueror contained some treasure, broke it open, and found the bones within, enveloped in red silk, the colour being still apparent; the bones were of an extraordinary large size, and had every appearance of being those of a very strong man. Not content with this devastation, the mob next tore down a curious picture * of the Conqueror, painted on wood, representing him exactly in the dress in which he was buried: This picture had been painted from the body in the year 1522, by order of Pierre de Martigny, bishop of Castres, and abbot of Caen, when an archbishop, a bishop, and a lord-cardinal of Rome visited the city, who, desiring to see the body of William, they caused the tomb to be opened, and found the Conqueror's remains exactly in the state in which they had been interred. An epitaph was discovered within the tomb; this epitaph had been copied at the bottom of the picture on wood, which, the same writer informs us, was afterwards used for a table by a low person in Caen, from whom he obtained it. The

* Although De Bras says, the picture represented the Conqueror as he appeared when his tomb was opened, it is extremely probable, that that of the strutting figure of William, still shown in the church, is the identical picture, as it is evidently of the above date.

Holy Trinity was founded by Matilda, A. D. 1082.* It is a fine building, and a perfect specimen of the architecture of the time; as it is now converted into a manufactory, the interior of the church has been spoiled, by the erection of a floor, to make two divisions for apartments, one above, and the other beneath. The lid of Matilda's stone coffin, bearing a curious inscription, was recently found in this church, and has lately been removed to the *Abbais aux Hommes;* it is of grey marble, and so plain in its appearance, that an indifferent observer would never suspect it was intended to cover royalty, the inscription arranged in lines upon it is its only ornament.

The following is a correct copy of the inscription, with all its abbreviations and singularities: —

Egregie pulchri tegit hec structura sepulchri
Moribus insigne germen regale Mathildem
Dux flandrita pater huic extitit Adala mater
Francorum gentis Rotberti filia regis
Et soror Henrici regalis ede potiti
Regi magnifico Willelmo juncta marito
Presentem sedem presente fecit et edem
Tam multis terris qua multis rebus honestis
A se ditatam se procurante dicatam
Hec consolatrix inopum pietatis amatrix
Gazis dispersis pauper sibi dives egenis
Sic infinite petiit consortia vite
In prima mensis post primam luce Novembris.

At the time this coffin lid was discovered, they found also a coffin, in the centre of the under croft, containing the bones of a superior of the convent, with whose remains they discovered

* In the excellent work of Mr. Cotman of Yarmouth, entitled "The Architectural Antiquities of Normandy," may be seen some beautiful views of this abbey, and other interesting remains.

many very curious antiquities, amongst them a pastoral staff: the head or crook being of copper, small in size; the ball at its base was formed of amber; also a ring with an inscription upon it in the inside, two small square leaden boxes, and some fragments of linen were likewise found. It has been conjectured that these bones were the remains of Cecilia, daughter of the Conqueror, who was the first abbess of this house. At the time the Hugonots destroyed the monument of Matilda, it is said a ring of sapphire, set in gold, was taken from her hand; this ring was in the possession of the abbess of the convent, who gave it to the Baron de Conty, constable of France, in the reign of Charles IX.

Before the Revolution, none but ladies of illustrious birth were allowed to become sisters of the Holy Trinity.

Adjoining the church of the *Abbaie aux Hommes*, the Conqueror erected a palace. Some of the rooms now remaining are said to be of his time. An apartment, called the Baron's Hall, is paved with some very curious Norman glazed tiles, ornamented with the arms of the Barons, but there is little probability that this building is a part of the original palace. The tiles are most erroneously cited as a proof of its great antiquity; but these tiles are certainly not older than the time of our Edward the Third. Caen presents so many interesting objects, that I much regret we could not remain there longer than we did.

We quitted that city on the morning of the 15th instant, and set out for Bayeux in the diligence, with two very amusing companions; a young French gentleman, returned from Italy, music-mad, and an intelligent lively old abbé, who overwhelmed me with snuff, politeness, and questions relative to English literature. He spoke in raptures of our Sterne, Fielding, and Richardson, particularly of the Clarissa Harlowe of the latter, a

work known and admired throughout France. The French have a very high opinion of our novelists in general, and allow they have but few writers who excel in works of fiction, almost all their novels being translations from the English. Amongst French writers of modern date, none, perhaps, have been more universally praised than Madame de Stael. Her novels are read with an admiration almost enthusiastic. Her Delphine, especially, possesses an irresistible charm; for who can take it up without going through the whole six volumes: yet it is decidedly a bad book, and that of the most dangerous kind. The very feelings it excites are a proof of its pernicious effect; for the reader is charmed both with the hero and heroine of the fable. Human nature needs no incentive either to practise or excuse what is morally bad, and this work would lead to both. Of all improper compositions, none are perhaps so dangerous in their consequences (especially to young minds), as those which dress what is in itself vicious in a pleasing and modest garb. Undisguised vice is too coarse to be suffered by a polished mind, and, wanting the art to please, fails in the effort to seduce; but the imagination once dazzled and inflamed, our admiration strongly excited in the palliation of wrong principles, the mind too readily admits the delusion, and receives that, which, if drawn in less captivating colours, it would certainly reject. Such feelings cannot be right, nor the book that inspires them, a book peculiarly adapted to charm the female heart. Women are generally formed with more sensibility than judgment: they require every means to strengthen rather than enervate the mind; for it is the part of wisdom to counteract the defects of nature, and to lay up those stores of steady principle, that become habitually a refuge from ourselves, that sober the mind,

and render it, in moments of trial, as a rock, against which the adverse tempest breaks, and the winds spend their fury, but shake not its firm and everlasting base.

Delphine is so inspired by generous feelings, so decked with specious sentiments, that the reader, wrapt in the delusion, is almost tempted to believe, that the principles which elevate the soul of Delphine cannot be wrong. Yet they will not bear the only test of truth, — their consonance with the divine edicts of moral rectitude. Such is the character of the heroine, as traced by the lively pencil of Madame de Stael; but her picture is like a transparency, that derives its lustre from the light it receives behind the thin and gaily-coloured canvas: take that away and all is dark, it would not bear to face its surface, the clear and steady eye of day. Unsupported by the sophistry of pernicious sentiment, unaided by the graces of language, and stripped of glittering ornament, how would such a work appear in plain and homely, but just and simple fiction. The heroine would sink into a very weak woman at the best, whose conduct is something more than weak, — decidedly bad. It is surprising how blind are the generality of the French to the highly immoral tendency of such a book, replete as it is, with innumerable beauties, and the most profound reflections of a great and powerful mind. The extraordinary success it has received in France, evinces, in a great measure, a want of moral propriety.

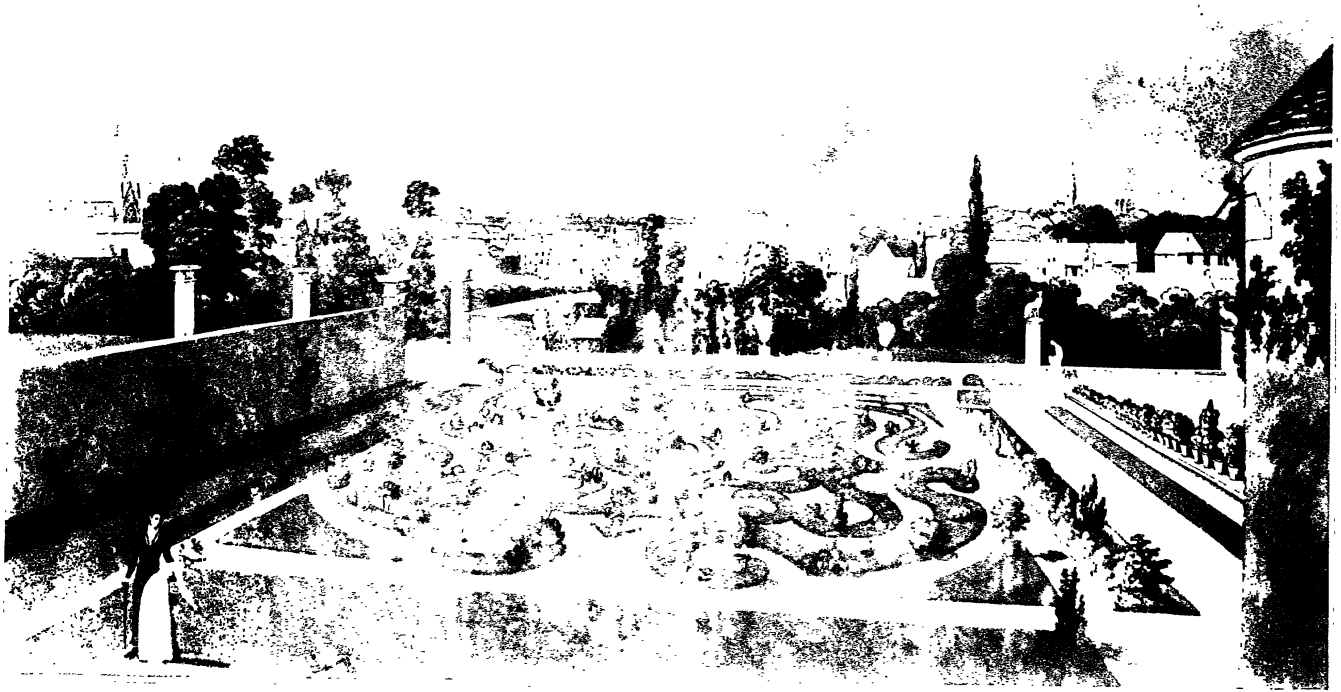
When speaking of literary productions, I may here be allowed to remark, that lively as the French are, in general, although a people of quick imagination and animated feelings, they have not that taste for "the wonderful, the wild," we sober English possess. This is evident in their writers; for none have produced any work that can rank with the sublime productions of our Milton,

Dryden, Akenside, Chatterton, or Young. Their poetry is in general a distillation from the ancients, but wanting their originality, energy, and force. England has many pastoral poets; France but few. This deficiency may arise, in a great measure, from the character of the people; for it requires a deep turn of thought, and a sobriety of mind, to contemplate with feeling the magnificent beauties of nature; and the French have but little taste for the tranquil and pure pleasures afforded by romantic or picturesque scenery. They consider their poetry equal to that of Italy; but the works of the Italian poets are replete with the most lively descriptions of nature, which may be also found in the Welsh and Northern bards, who excel in the grandeur of their imagery, and seem as if they had gained the inspiration that breathes throughout their verse, by a contemplation of the great and stupendous objects that characterise the features of their native land. A Frenchman's admiration of nature is second-hand: he admires the talent of the poet rather than the subject; for he will expatiate with energy upon a book where her works are well described, and would pass through the finest country without noticing the objects it presents.

But it is not only in a want of feeling for the charms of nature that the taste of the generality of the French may be impugned. Their country every where abounds with the most beautiful Gothic structures, and interesting remains of antiquity, that must excite the admiration of all persons who have the least taste for the productions of art, and the wonderful ingenuity of man: yet upon the French such works are entirely lost; few, very few of them, can in any manner appreciate what their country so amply possesses. They look upon a fine building with a stupid insensibility: even some of their clergy, and well-educated persons have fre-

quently appeared surprised, when we have spoken with admiration of a Gothic structure, or an ancient castle; and if we asked them questions to obtain any information concerning either, they have often replied, that it was not worth our attention, "*C'est vilain c'est barbare; c'est vieux, ce n'est rien;*" and proved as ignorant concerning it, as the most illiterate person to whom we could have applied. The French, who do profess a love of antiquity and curious research, generally confine it to a high-sounding admiration of Grecian or Roman remain, and totally overlook all that is valuable and interesting in their own country, as if unworthy of their notice. The ingenious Monsieur Willemin, with whom we met at Paris, and who has produced a most valuable and admirably-executed work upon the antiquities of his own country, finds so little encouragement, that he told me he had sometimes scarcely sufficient even to live: his work he still pursues with enthusiasm, and seems to devote all to the accomplishment of one object: his wife is dead, and his only son was killed during the late war. I could not see a man, whose talents and misfortunes should command the respect and sympathy of his own country, so neglected, without feeling pity for his situation, and esteem for that persevering spirit he evinces.

In France the government has done every thing for the encouragement of the arts, and individuals nothing. In England it is the reverse, the government has done nothing, and individuals alone patronise and foster those pursuits, that reflect so much honour upon the taste and liberality of the nation at large. I must conclude this long epistle with telling you how often I think of you all, and how much I long once more to see you. Adieu.



LETTER X.

My dear ——, Bayeux, August 26, 1818.

I received your letter this morning, and am truly rejoiced at the good news it contains; believe me, that a recital of trifling events that concern you, becomes interesting to me, who am so far removed from home; and, judging your feelings by my own, I am careful not to omit the notice even of trivial things, considering that although they are common to me, they will be novelties to you in England.

I wish it were possible you could visit me here without the trouble of crossing the sea; but, as the convenience of balloon travelling has not yet been introduced amongst other extraordinary modern improvements, I must not ask you to submit to the perils of a long journey for so short a time. We are now established in a very charming house at Bayeux, much larger than our purposes require; it is situated in a garden near the extremity of the town; we have a view of the houses and cathedral from our windows. This garden is laid out upon a little hill, and terminated by a terrace, adorned with geraniums and other flowering plants, that flourish in porcelain vases. Upon the columns of the terrace are placed two large blue china lions, who frown defiance upon all intruders. To the right, passing through an iron gateway, you enter a very agreeable orchard; and to the left stands the habitation of Monsieur l'Abbé Du ——, of whom we rent our house, for the garden in which it stands is common to both dwellings. He has erected another very handsome building within the orchard,

which he appropriates for pleasure-rooms and visits of ceremony. Descending by a lower terrace, you are conducted into a hanging garden below, that leads to some meadows, through which the river Aure flows at the bottom. Bayeux was formerly the Bajocæ of the Romans in Gaul. Several antiquities have been found in the vicinity of the town. Some time since, the Abbé Du ——, in excavating the earth, for the purpose of making a fish-pond in our garden, discovered several Roman coins, and other curious vestiges; amongst them a little brazen statue of a woman with a child in her arms. Such, my dear —— is the situation of our dwelling, and the interior corresponds with the handsome appearance of the place. My bed-chamber is hung with old tapestry. The tables are of marble with gilt ornaments. A large picture of a hunting gentleman in the last century, surrounded by his game, decorates the centre wall; and a portrait of Louis XIV. frowning, in a full-bottomed wig, forms the prominent ornament of the room. My bed is of red calico, lined with white embroidered sarsnet, the work of some neighbouring nuns. I have engaged a French servant, little Madeleine, whose very short figure (neatly attired in a red petticoat and jacket) forms a droll contrast to her high Norman cap. She is a lace-maker by profession, and very expert in her trade. The same as the peasantry she wears wooden shoes, and runs about the house in them with surprising agility. Madeleine, like all French servants, has a good deal of cunning and address, is remarkably attentive and familiar, possesses a great volubility of tongue, and frequently joins in conversation, passes a merry joke, or sings a song with so much good humour and anxiety to please, that it is impossible to feel offended by her freedom.

It is fortunate for us that we are so agreeably situated during

our residence in Bayeux, as I think it likely we shall continue two months in this town. I am much pleased with the society of our landlord, the good Abbé Du ——, who is so extremely amiable, that I must make you acquainted with him, for he is indeed a character of no common interest, the perfect and exemplary model of a good man. The Abbé Du —— is tall, stout, and well-looking, his countenance enlivened by gaiety and benevolence; he is a rich canon of the cathedral here, a merry good-natured soul, very witty, and loves pure wine better than holy water. We find him both kind and attentive to us; my parlour he daily decorates with the flowers of his garden, from which he sends us the choicest fruits. The Abbé pays us a visit every evening, after his early supper at seven o'clock, and sometimes walks with me before dinner in the grounds; he is always a gay, sensible, and intelligent companion, alike divested of French levity and Catholic presumption. A few evenings since he introduced us to the venerable Bishop of Bayeux, and his lively secretary. The bishop is a fine affable old man. The conversation turned on England; both the visitors spoke in high terms of our country, for the bishop had passed some time in London during the French Revolution; and the secretary was so polite and gallant, that he averred the English women were such charming creatures, that the happiest hours of his life had been passed in the island they adorned. We were greatly amused with the little party, all clergy, and all so different from each other: the bishop, dignified and serious, spoke like a man accustomed to authority; the secretary blended an humble deference, with the most lively airs of court breeding; my good Abbé played the kind host, free alike from authority or submission, and, by a fund of good humour, sought to make each guest satisfied with

liimself, and entertained them all with the sprightly sallies of a cheerful and contented mind. The three prelates, in their long black gowns, and the distinct and marked character of each, reminded me of the description of churchmen so often given by Cervantes.

The Abbé Du —— suffered severely from the Revolution; for he was persecuted, or concealed nearly ten years: during that period, he had many narrow escapes of falling into the hands of his enemies; and more than once owed the preservation of his life, to the care and vigilance of his faithful housekeeper Mademoiselle Victoire, who is now an ancient maiden of sixty. Victoire has still the traces of having been a very pretty woman in her youth, she is the *factotum* of the good Canon, ever bustling, ever active, she conducts the *ménage* of the house, makes the best preserves and *liqueurs*, and in the art of cookery, might rival Dame Jacintha herself. At one time she is busied in scolding the maids, or the boys, at another in feeding her chickens, or turning her wheel, for Victoire spins the finest flax in Bayeux: at the hour of dinner she assumes the most important function of her office. The good-natured housekeeper then appears in her clean little white jacket, and her best cap turned back, to show the long gold pendants, attached to her ears. Heated with culinary occupation, her plump cheeks glowing with exercise, and her little grey eyes sparkling with the self-satisfaction of her good cheer, Victoire directs all, sees the dishes, the fruits, the wine, all arranged in their proper and regular station; she presents the Abbé his napkin, and, standing by his chair, placing one hand on his shoulder, and pointing towards some dish or ragout, with the other, exclaims, "Taste that, Monsieur l'Abbé, it is the best

thing on table. "*C'est moi qui ai fait cela.*" When there is no company, Victoire takes her seat at the Abbé's table, deserving so honourable a post by her long and tried service. In her are united the valuable qualities of the faithful housekeeper, the attentive servant, and the kind friend of her worthy master.

The Abbé has often repeated to me many interesting occurrences, in the events of his own life, during his long and painful persecution: as they may afford you some amusement in their recital, and also convey to you considerable information, respecting the cruel procedures of the Revolutionists, I shall here briefly detail a few of the most remarkable circumstances.

During the Abbé's persecution, he was frequently concealed in the house, where we now reside: it was often searched, in the hope of finding him, and Victoire was alone acquainted with the secret of the Abbé's retreat, in a loft, beneath the roof of the house; this loft was not of sufficient height to admit his standing in an upright posture; he ascended to it by a ladder placed behind the sliding partition of a closet; when this partition was closed, a few temporary shelves were immediately placed up, and some bundles of linen, or books thrown upon them; this last-mentioned service was invariably performed by Victoire, whose natural firmness and sagacity rendered her the proper agent of so important a trust. At one time, when obliged to fly from his own residence, the Abbé was concealed in a sort of hole, beneath the roof of a friend's habitation, in Bayeux, where rats were the companions of his retreat. He was continually obliged to shift his residence; sometimes he remained in the country, or, disguised, wandered about in the fields. He was once at his father's house, about eight miles from the town, when he received information that a party of the Revolutionists were

coming to search for him: he knew not what to do, or where to seek for shelter; the country was every where beset with spies; to leave the house, would be certain destruction, and his servants dared not convey him from it, so much were they awed by fear. The Abbé considered a moment, and then resolved upon the only likely means of saving his life, accordingly he informed the affrighted servants, that, before midnight, he should endeavour his own escape in disguise, and that he would send them with a chest, containing all his property of any value to Bayeux, which they should convey thither in the night. He then ordered supper, and, after a hasty repast, caused the large chest to be brought into the room, and made the servants place within it all his valuables and his plate, even to that which was upon the table: this done, he shook them by the hand, bid each a formal adieu, and dismissed them, saying he was about disguising himself, in order to make his escape, and as he apprehended that fear might induce some one of them to betray him, if taken by surprise, he would not have even his own domestics acquainted with the manner of his retreat, he bid them return in an hour, and bear away the chest. His injunctions were implicitly obeyed; the chest was carried off in a little cart, attended by three men, who had long been in the service of the Abbé's father. During their route, they met the party, who were proceeding to search for their young master: they stopped the servants, and enquired what they were carrying away in the cart? After some demur, being assured it contained nothing, but things of their own of no value, that they were removing from a farm in the country, the party passed on, and conveyed the chest without farther molestation, to the Abbé's own house, in Bayeux; having safely deposited it in an inner apartment, they perceived the lid began to move, and to

the astonishment of the whole family, the good Abbé popped his head out of the chest, without having sustained any other inconvenience, than that of having had his wig shaken off during the ride.

The canon was not long suffered to enjoy security, or repose. The Revolutionists suspected he was concealed in his present house, then inhabited by his mother. He had once more recourse to his old hole, amongst the rats, at his friend's then deserted house in Bayeux, which he used alone as a temporary hiding-place, in cases of great emergency: there food was brought to him by a female relative, who was entrusted with the secret of his retreat. The good lady, meaning no ill, but, like all her sex, finding a secret a most intolerable burthen, in order to ease herself of the load, gave half of it to another female, her particular and confidential friend; this confidential friend, wondering who the person could be, to whom her companion took food, and dying with curiosity to discover all she was forbid knowing, determined to watch her steps, and in the mean time just mentioned the secret to another female. The hour at length came, when the lady was accustomed to take food to her poor caged relative: away goes the confidant, wrapped up in a cloak, and narrowly watching her friend, she saw her turn down several streets, and stop before a house, looking with much caution to the right and left, before she tapped at the door: in she went; and after a time (much longer than necessary for any reasonable person's dinner), came out of the house again, looked about her with a careful eye, and then returned by another way. The confidant thought there was something very strange in all this. A person *was* concealed, to whom her friend took food; this was all she knew,—all that had been entrusted to her: she had certainly found out the house; but

who could the *person* be? was it a man, or a woman? Assuredly not a woman; or her friend would at least have told that: it must be then a man:—but could it be an old, or a young man? There was certainly great difference between the two: her friend, a pretty girl, taking food so cautiously to a concealed person of the other sex, was a strong presumptive evidence;— he must be young. What a field for conjecture and suspicion! Really her friend had looked very grave lately: — there must be something in all this; and what that something was, she now plainly made out, must be a lover, — a forbidden lover of course, or why not tell her the whole affair. A lover so carefully concealed; what would be the consequence?— an elopement at the first opportunity.—Having thus settled the whole affair, highly pleased with her own sagacity, and anxious to display her penetration had discovered all the mystery, her head full of its importance, away she goes to the other female, *her* confidential friend, to whom she had hinted her knowledge of the secret: with eager communication, she told all she knew, or rather all she suspected. The secret got wind; for secrets fly faster than all the winds that blow: the whole business was quickly spread through every quarter of the town, and the poor Abbé, deprecating all secret-keepers, and confidential friends, was driven from his retreat; from his last hope of safety; and, despairing of his success, resolved upon attempting the only chance left: he quitted his hole; abandoned his companion rats; dressed in the attire of one of his sisters, who fortunately was a woman of no feminine or diminutive dimensions. He gained the door; but, as ill luck would have it, the moon, that saucy lady, who sometimes betrays the secrets that the night is apt to hide, shone as brightly, as if she had a mind her beams, in envy, should outvie the dawning graces of Aurora. In plain English, it was a

moonlight night. The Abbé proceeded, with a beating heart, to his paternal roof; and making towards it with somewhat hasty strides, little suiting the delicacy of a female step, he was espied and followed by a foe; for no friendly darkness interfered to shroud the extraordinary size of his petticoats, or conceal his masculine step.

He had not long been within the shelter of his own dwelling, when the house was beset by those who sought his life. The moon, capricious as her sex, now no longer shed her beams, but hid her proud and peerless brow behind the dark and angry gathering clouds, that burst in torrents of rain. There was no time for concealment, no moment to admit a deliberating pause. They had passed the outer gate; they were advancing towards the hall. The Abbé fled; and escaping by a little door, rushed into the garden, and leaped the terrace. In the covert of some bushes beneath he remained concealed. The house was searched in every corner; the affrighted Abbé now perceived they were traversing the garden, uttering dreadful exclamations indicative of their murderous intent. He crept closer within the thickest covert of the bush, and soon saw them advancing towards the very spot where he was concealed. The foremost man carried a lantern, that threw a broad light upon every surrounding object. All hope fled; this light would inevitably betray him; the steps advanced, the light glimmered upon each leaf, wet and sparkling with large drops of rain. The ruffians paused a moment, and searched some bushes beneath a tree adjacent to the spot of his retreat. They again advanced; the last faint ray of hope expired; they were now within a few paces of the bush: but Providence, whose saving hand can alone snatch us from the perils of inevitable danger, delivered the unfortunate man

when all apparent rescue seemed vain. At the moment when they passed the covert spot, the foremost ruffian, who held the light, turned it towards some opposite bushes, and went on without a pause. The Abbé dared not quit his retreat, but remained close within shelter during the greater part of the night, till he was freed by hearing the light step and low voice of the faithful Victoire, who, fearing even to trust the air with the accents of her words, softly whispered, " They are gone, all is safe." The poor Abbé, drenched with rain and benumbed with cold, returned to the house, gratefully blessing that Providence which had saved him in so perilous a time.

But a few days elapsed after this singular escape, when Victoire, then a young and pretty woman, was summoned to appear before the Revolutionary Council. It was known she had been brought up in the family of the Abbé Du —— almost from her birth, and that she was considered a most faithful domestic of her protectress, the canon's mother. It was therefore suspected she would be a likely person to know the secret of her young master's retreat. Victoire, naturally strong-minded and acute, appeared undismayed before the council; and, with the most easy and mild address, demanded for what purpose she was summoned to appear. She was told, with many severe and menacing expressions, that she was suspected of being acquainted with the place of the Abbé Du ——'s concealment. — " Is that all?" said Victoire; " well, I am here to answer." They then informed her, that the name of her master, as belonging to the church, had been inserted in the list of persons condemned for execution, and that his so repeatedly escaping the vigilance of pursuit, must arise from his having some friends to shelter him in a place of secure retreat. These particular circumstances were related to me by Victoire

herself, who repeated every word of the examination, with an energy and warmth of feeling I should vainly attempt describing. The good housekeeper seized my hand, and raising her eyes towards Heaven, with an expression of gratitude and triumph, she blessed God, who had given her strength and firmness to save her master. She wiped the tears that fell fast down her aged cheeks, and giving my hand another hearty squeeze, revived her spirits by a pinch of snuff, and then continued her narrative.

" Young woman," said the Revolutionary President, " do you know you are before the Council, to answer such questions as may be put to you ?" — " *Yes, I do.*"

" And that your life depends upon your truly and distinctly, without evasion, answering such questions ?" — " *I know it.*"

" Do you also know that we have not only the power to take away your life for falsehood, but also to reward you, if you act sincerely towards us : are you not servant to the Abbé Du —— ?" — " *No; I am his father's servant.*"

" What do you know of the Abbé Du —— ?" — " *That he is my master's son, and an Abbé.*"

" Where has he been, and where is the place of his unknown concealment ?" — " *Where he has been I cannot tell; and where his unknown concealment is, would be no longer unknown, if I knew it.*"

" What have you to do with him ?" — " *Nothing.*"

" What do you know of him ?" — " *Nothing.*"

" These answers will not do; we shall search his house immediately ?" — " *Whenever you please.*"

" But we shall search it again and again ?" — " *Again and again, if you will.*"

" You are impertinent, and do not fear the council?" — " *I am innocent, and cannot fear it.*"

" Will you serve us?" — " *If I am obliged.*"

" Whatever information you may gain of the Abbé Du ——, inform us, and you shall be rewarded by the council?" — " *When the council gain information from me, I shall expect their reward.*"

Victoire was dismissed; and a short time after the house was again searched. The Abbé took shelter in the loft, by means of the partition; Victoire hastened to the pursuers and invited them in, conducting them over the house herself, and opened even the cellars, and the presses in the bed-chambers, without betraying the least apprehension or alarm.

Some time after the search, the Revolutionary council had a dinner, Victoire knew one of their attendants, who was her cousin, but not her confidential friend. She determined, if possible, to be present at this meeting, in the hope of gaining intelligence, should they intend any fresh search after her master. Accordingly she offered to help her cousin in the dinner preparations, &c., and did not fail assisting in waiting at the table. The wine circulated freely; over their cups the party discussed their affairs, and spoke of the destined victims of their fury. The persecuted Abbé Du —— was named, whose detention they were resolved to compass, and proposed a search the next day. Whilst they were speaking, one of them exclaimed, " There is his pretty servant, who behaved so saucily at the council; — what do you here, Victoire?" she advanced towards the table, and said, " She was come to assist her cousin, who was one of their domestics, and that if the council would please to remember, they had bid *her serve them.*" She was dismissed,

and desired to mind what she was about, or it would be worse for her.

The Abbé, continually persecuted and beset, uncertain of his safety, and each day fearing that might be his last, was at length induced to listen to a proposal made by two other priests, of concerting an escape from France. In company with them, he quitted Bayeux, and got into a cabriolet that was waiting for the fugitives without the town: they drove towards the adjacent port, in order to embark in a vessel that was to sail for England so soon as they should be on board. They had not long been seated in the carriage, when the Abbé perceived the driver was not keeping the direct road. He spoke to the man, desiring him to turn down another way; the postillion persisted all was right, and without minding him, continued his own course. The Abbé felt certain they were, or would be betrayed, and earnestly persuaded his companions to insist on returning back to the town; this they refused, assuring him they knew the driver was a fellow not to be corrupted by the revolutionary party. The Abbé once more conjured them to abandon their purposed escape, but all his solicitations proving vain, he bid them adieu, got out of the chaise, and towards night-fall returned to the town. The unfortunate men who remained in the carriage were stopped, given up to the revolutionary tribunal, and in a few hours lost their heads. The good canon, disheartened by the unhappy fate of his companions, abandoned all thoughts of escaping from France, and determined to run the hazard of remaining within his house, and, in cases of necessity or surprise, to resort to his old hiding-place under the roof. A very high wall encompassed a small part of his garden, as his health began to suffer from such close confinement, he rose every morning at

four o'clock, and took the benefit of the open air, by cultivating his little garden within the high wall. Before the people were stirring in the neighbourhood he returned to his apartment, and spent the day in the solitary occupation of his books, his pencil, or his violincello, that he practised with a mute stop, lest the sounds of the instrument should be heard without doors. He had lost, by the decease of an excellent mother, the companion and solace of his confined hours. His father dared not remain on the spot, lest it should be the means of betraying his son. The house now appeared a lonely and deserted dwelling, left solely in the charge of the young and faithful Victoire. Such was the life of this amiable and persecuted man, for a long and doubtful time.

I could relate many other interesting anecdotes of his trials and escapes; but, as I dare say you are as tired of reading as I am of writing so long a letter, I shall bid you adieu, expecting that you will send me an answer immediately upon receiving this; and believe me, if I have not the power to entertain you as much as I desire, you must impute it to a want of ability, rather than of will, in yours, &c.

LETTER XI.

My dear ——, Bayeux.

I resume my pen to give you a particular account of the celebrated tapestry now in the possession of the municipality of this town. It was formerly preserved in the cathedral, which it once adorned on festival days; for in an inventory of the goods appertaining to the see of Bayeux, in 1476, the tapestry is thus mentioned, " *une tente tres longue, et etroite de telle a broderie des ymages, et escripteaulx faisans representations, du conquest d'Angleterre, laquelle est tendue environ la néf de L'Eglise le jour, et par les octaves des reliques.*

The date of this curious work has given rise to many disputes amongst the learned. Some persons consider it of a later period than the Conquest; but tradition gives to Matilda, the wife of William, the merit of having executed this very interesting memorial of her husband's greatest victory. Be that as it may, the antiquity of the work cannot be doubted; it bears its own internal evidence of correctness and authenticity, and gives to the lover of remote research, many little circumstances of which history bears no record. I must not omit telling you, that when Napoleon projected the invasion of England, he caused this memorial of its early conquest to be brought to Paris, where it was exhibited to the people.

The tapestry is worked with different-coloured worsteds, upon white cloth, to which time has given the tinge of brown holland. The drawing of the figures is rude and barbarous, no attention

has been paid to correctness of colour in the objects depicted. The horses are blue, green, red, or yellow: this circumstance may arise from the limited number of worsteds employed in the work; they consist of eight colours only,—dark and light blue, red, yellow, buff, dark and light green. There is a border at the top and bottom of the tapestry, consisting of some few of the fables of Æsop; birds, animals, and other objects. In that part where the battle of Hastings is represented, the dead bodies supply the border. You will form some idea of the labour such a production required, and of the industry of the Queen, when I tell you it is 227 feet in length, and about 20 inches in width. The tapestry represents, in regular succession, the events which preceded the Conquest, and the principal circumstances connected with it. As I have minutely examined the whole, and copied the inscriptions that are beneath the border on the upper part. I shall give you an account of them as they follow in succession.

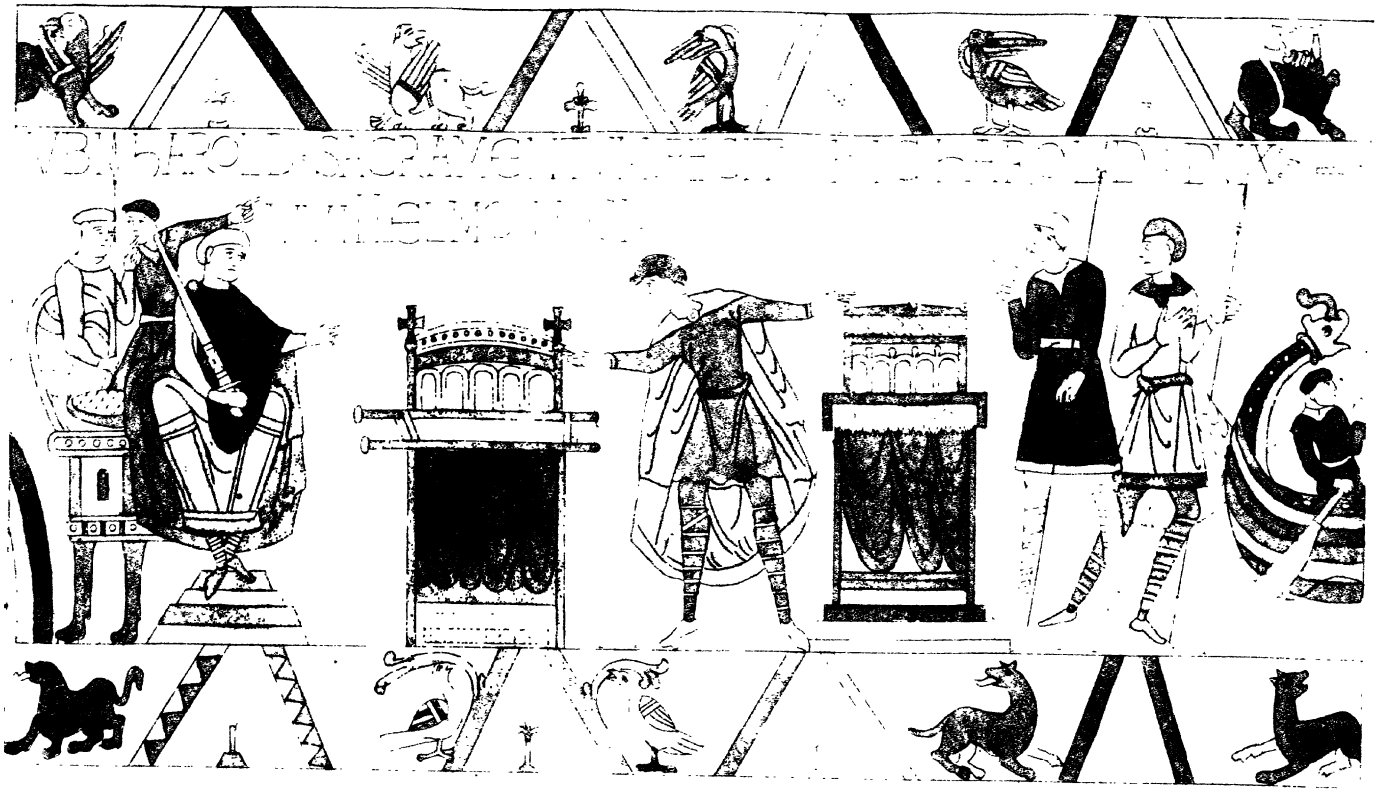
The work begins with the figure of a king seated upon his throne, who is addressing a person standing by his side: the inscription is simply "Edward, Rex." The subject of this conversation is not defined; we are informed merely that the King is Edward the Confessor, and it is conjectured, from the departure of Harold, which immediately succeeds, that he is addressing that nobleman, for the purpose of sending him on some mission into France. Historians are of various opinions respecting this event: some say that Harold went out on a sailing excursion, and was driven upon the coast of France by a sudden tempest. Others, that he was deputed by Edward to go into Normandy, for the purpose of appointing William heir to the Saxon crown. And some think that Harold is represented in

the beginning of the tapestry, soliciting Edward to grant him permission to leave England, in order to obtain the release of his two brothers, who had been consigned to the care of William during the rebellion of Godwin. We next see Harold proceeding to Bosham, attended by several of his followers; he carries a hawk upon his fist, at that time the distinguishing mark of nobility; his dogs are running before him. A church is then represented, in front of which are two men, who appear about to enter: above is the word "*Ecclesia.*" The party next appear feasting at a table in a house, previous to their embarkation. Some persons are descending the steps from the apartment where they have been dining; others are embarking in four vessels. Harold enters first, still bearing the hawk, and carrying a dog under his arm. These last-mentioned figures are wading through the water, naked from the waist downwards. The last of the four vessels next appears anchoring in France, Harold standing at the prow. Three figures are then represented upon land, one of them is Harold, in the act of being seized by order of Guy, Earl of Ponthieu, who is on horseback, followed by his people. Harold and Guy are then seen, mounted upon their horses, and attended both by Saxon and Norman soldiers. The Saxons are distinguished by wearing mustachios; the Normans have none.

Harold and Guy appear in conversation, and messengers arrive from William, Duke of Normandy, to the Earl of Ponthieu; a tree divides the subject here, and in like manner all the principal events throughout the work. Some historians relate, that when Harold was driven by tempest on the French coast, he was detained as a prisoner by Guy, and that he sent a messenger to William, with an account of his situation, whose threats and lar-

gesses obtained his release. The tapestry seems to confirm this account; for the messenger kneeling at the feet of William is known to be a Saxon, by his unshaven upper lip, and is not therefore a Norman envoy. Guy is seen immediately after, conducting Harold to the Duke: to what town he was carried we are not informed. The tapestry mentions only that he was brought to the palace of the Norman Prince. Beneath the words, "*Unus clericus et Ælfgyva*," appears a female figure, and a priest, who is apparently giving a benediction. It has been conjectured, that this subject alludes to the betrothing of a daughter of William the Conqueror's to Harold: the objection to such supposition arises from the doubt and mystery in which the circumstance is involved. Historians tell us, that William had five daughters by his Queen Matilda: Cecily, the eldest, who was the first abbess of Caen; Constance, who became wife to an Earl of Bretagne; Adela, espoused to the Earl of Blois; and two younger, who died single: one of these, authors say, was affianced to Harold, but never wedded, and that she was afterwards engaged to Alphonso, King of Galicia; but being deeply enamoured of the Saxon lord, and dreading an union with the Spanish monarch, whom she had never seen, she fervently prayed that death might preserve her chastity and faith inviolate to him she loved: tradition adds, that her prayers were granted, as she died in her journey towards Spain, and that her body was brought back to Bayeux, where it was royally interred. It is also said, that the piety of this lady was so great, that her knees were become like horn, from constant kneeling.

We will now return to the tapestry. The next event is William's warfare, with Conan, Earl of Bretagne, in which it is apparent Harold assisted, and rendered essential service to the Norman party.



Soldiers, mounted on horseback, arrive at Mount St. Michel, and pass the river Cosno. Harold is depicted assisting some persons who had fallen into the quick-sands, whilst they were passing the river. The army arrive at Dol, in Britanny; some troops are flying at their approach towards Rennes; Conan escapes from the town, and descends the walls by means of a rope. The Norman soldiers are next employed in attacking Dinant; Conan delivers up to them the keys of the town, which they succeeded in taking. After this event, William rewards the services of Harold by giving him a suit of armour, with which he is represented as investing him. William and his party then arrive at Bayeux.

It is said that William, in order to secure to himself the succession of the Saxon throne, without having Harold for a competitor, caused him to take a solemn vow, that he would never attempt the possession of the English crown: this vow he obliged Harold (then within his power), to make upon a *covered altar*, beneath which William had secretly placed, the most sacred and precious relics; no sooner had Harold sworn the injoined oath, than the Norman Duke uncovered the altar, and showing him by what sacred things he had vowed, enforced upon his mind the blasphemy he would commit, if he ever attempted the violation of his oath. The tapestry apparently confirms this political trick of the Conqueror's; for Harold is represented taking the oath, while standing between two *covered altars*. Harold next embarks for England, and arrives at the court of Edward the Confessor: he appears giving an account to the Saxon king, of the event of his mission into Normandy.

The succeeding subject is the death of Edward. He is lying upon a bed, and his wife Editha weeping by his side. Beneath he is represented dead, and laid out. The funeral procession to

Westminster-Abbey follows immediately after his decease; and chronicles tell us that he was interred the next day. Edward the Confessor had rebuilt the Abbey. It is singular that a figure is pourtrayed placing a weathercock upon the spire of the church. It has been conjectured, that this is designed as an indication that the building was but just finished, the weathercock being the last necessary appendage. A hand from heaven is pointing towards the Abbey, as if marking it for consecration. *

The next subject is the crown being offered to Harold by the people. Above are the words, "*Hic dederunt Haroldo coronam Regis.*" From the word *dederunt* being used in the Norman record, we are induced to believe that the crown was given to Harold, and not seized by him, The tapestry marking the circumstance in these words, appears a strong confirmation of its truth; for had Harold really *seized* the crown, it is most probable that the Normans would have recorded the act, the better to support the pretensions of William. Yet it may also be observed that the elective form of English coronations makes the crown in all cases a gift; and it is more likely the Saxons should have invested the sovereign authority of their kingdom in the person of a Saxon, rather than a foreign chief. By such an election of the people, Harold is exculpated from the blame of having broken an enforced vow. Yet Harold's election, brought about by intrigue, was to the exclusion of the rightful heir, Edgar Atheling.

Harold next appears seated upon his throne. Stigand, archbishop of Canterbury, is standing by his side. The subject that

* The church of St. Peter's, Westminster, was consecrated but a few days before the death of Edward the Confessor.

follows is the appearance of a comet, at which the people are gazing with astonishment, as an ominous sign of bloodshed threatening to overwhelm their country. Harold is then seen upon the throne, addressing his conversation to a person who is standing by his side. In the border beneath are several boats. The inscription above is simply the word "Harold." As there is no explanation given to define this subject, it is not improbable that it relates to the embarkation of the forces of Haralld Hadrada, the king of Norway, and Tostig, the brother of Harold, who had joined in the Norwegian expedition against England. The figure speaking to Harold, may probably be intended as a messenger bringing him intelligence. The boats, in the border beneath, are, perhaps, a figurative emblem of the preparation for this naval expedition. I am induced to make these conjectures, from the probability that the subject thus hieroglyphically expressed, related to some event of importance to Harold. The victory he achieved over the Norwegian king, and his brother Tostig, was distinguished by the gallant and brave conduct of the Saxon prince; and it is more likely the tapestry should in some manner notice so memorable an event as the final overthrow of Hadrada, occurred but three days before the landing of William. It may also be remarked, that unless this subject is thus understood, it remains totally obscure and undefined. The battle took place near York. Without leisure for repose, that part of the army of Harold that survived the engagement, marched immediately towards Hastings.

The next subject the tapestry presents, is a ship bringing to William the news of Harold's having assumed the English crown. William, and his brother Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, appear consulting together, and giving orders that ships should be built

for the purposed invasion of England. Accordingly, several persons are employed in cutting down trees; carpenters are constructing vessels; and others draw them into the sea. The embarkation of the Normans forms the succeeding subject; they carry with them on board the ships, wine, arms, and provisions. William then passes the sea, and arrives in Pevensey bay. At the head of the Conqueror's vessel is the figure of a boy, which history records to have been the distinguishing mark of his ship. A lantern is fixed to the mast,—the known signal of William's vessel in the night, around which the fleet was directed to anchor. The troops and horses next appear disembarking; they proceed to Hastings, where they seize provisions. A figure bearing a pennon at the end of his lance, is simply distinguished by the words "*Hic est Wadard.*"* The Normans are busied in cooking meats, and regaling themselves at Hastings. The soldiers dine upon their shields. Odo bestows his benediction upon some viands on a table. The manner in which the fowls are brought to the board is certainly of a singular fashion; for they are presented to the guests by the attendants, upon small spits, and it seems probable that each person helped himself to a portion as they were handed round. In the print, published by Montfaucon, this circumstance, from incorrect delineation, is unintelligible. Odo and William, with their brother Robert, give orders that the army should encamp at Hastings. The news is then brought to William that Harold is advancing to oppose the Normans. A house on fire, from which a woman and child are escaping, forms the next subject.

* This Wadard had afterwards lands assigned him in Kent. See Domesday, fol. 6.

The soldiers of William leave Hastings to meet Harold in the field, and the Duke now first appears in armour for the battle, and comes forth to meet his opponent. Odo is armed likewise in mail; the bishop bears a mace, as the weapon he is to use in the fray; for ecclesiastics sought, in those days, to evade the admonition of the Scriptures against using a sword, or shedding man's blood in battle. Breaking heads, or breaking bones was, most probably, considered no bloodshed; and thus equivocating with God, and their own conscience, might be sanctioned in a priest. William is seen interrogating Vital, an individual of his army, concerning the state of Harold's defence. Harold also is receiving information relative to his enemies' forces. William then addresses his soldiers, to inspire them with boldness, and confidence in their meditated attack upon the Saxon troops. The Normans are on horseback, the Saxons on foot; the shields of the latter are generally distinguished by being round, with a boss in the centre. The battle now ensues; Lewine and Gyrth, the brothers of Harold, are slain. The action appears obstinately contested on both sides, and many of either party killed. Some detachments of the Saxon army are next seen entrenched, hurling their javelins at their advancing foes.

The Saxons had formed themselves upon a rising ground; the Normans aimed their weapons with destructive effect; but their opponents, undismayed, supported their position with the greatest valour, and repelled every onset. The allies of William, and many of his own troops, disheartened by their fruitless attack, began to give way; and a report prevailed that the Norman duke was slain. These circumstances conjoined, were nearly fatal to the invader: his forces seemed upon the point of flying. William, ever active in the field, saw the panic that threatened

a fatal issue to his hopes; he rushed amongst the flying troops, menacing, and even striking several with his lance; and taking off his helmet, the better to assure them he still existed, vowed that with God's help he would that day conquer his foes. By this conduct, the Duke at length succeeded in rallying the fugitives, and once more led them to the onset; a general slaughter ensued, but the main body of the Saxons was unbroken. William, fearing a renewal of the panic that had so recently threatened destruction, and seeing no probable means to break the phalanx of the Saxon troops, determined upon hazarding a stratagem. He commanded that a precipitate attack should be made, and followed by a feigned retreat, hoping that the Saxons would fall into the snare, and pursue the Normans. The firm body of his enemies then being broken by the ardour of pursuit, he directed his party to turn upon them, and, if possible, to surround them on all sides. This manœuvre succeeded: the Saxons were deceived, but it proved nearly fatal to William; for, in the heat of the design, when feigning a retreat, they came unexpectedly upon an excavation in the ground, which threw the Normans into such confusion and disorder, that with the utmost peril and difficulty they again rallied, and several perished from the disaster. William perceiving their danger, came up with the main body, and cut off the retreat of the pursuers, who vainly attempted to regain the elevation they had abandoned. This was a critical moment for the fortunes of the undaunted Harold. Had the Saxons regained the hill, or their chief survived the conflict, there is little probability William could have achieved more than an uncertain footing in a land, from which he would have been eventually driven, or where he else might have found a grave. But Harold, who united the enthusiasm of determined

valour, with the necessary skill and judgment of command, received a fatal arrow in his eye, before the victory was decided; he fell with many a brave adherent. When Harold was slain and fallen to the ground, some base hand plunged a spear into his thigh. History relates, that William afterwards disgraced the man who did it, for having been guilty of so cowardly an act. The Saxon troops, certain of their leader's fate, now felt that panic which had before assailed the Norman party. William seized the moment favourable for success, and rushed down upon them with a furious onset; once more they rallied, exasperated by Harold's death, and made a determined stand. But the fortune of William prevailed, amidst the slaughter of his troops and the flower of his nobility; he gained the triumph of a bloody and dear-bought field.

The tapestry agrees entirely with these historical relations; Odo is seen encouraging the troops, who are disheartened by a report of William's being slain. The strong position occupied by the Saxons on the rising ground, is likewise expressed, the Normans appear attacking them, and are repulsed, their cavalry and men being thrown into the greatest confusion. William also is seen taking off his helmet, as an assurance of his still existing. Eustace, Earl of Boulogne, (who is by the Duke's side,) bears a flag, which, from its remarkable form, is conjectured to be the Norman standard, probably that of the Duke. The engagement between both armies ensues; the followers of Harold are slain; Harold is represented receiving the arrow in his eye, he falls to the ground; a soldier pierces him in the thigh, with a sword. In the border of this part, several troops are employed in stripping the dead. The Normans have many archers on their side, and some who throw the javelin. The Saxons are lastly seen

flying before their victorious foes. Here the tapestry ends, for the rest is torn off, or more probably destroyed by time.

It was long since decided by the *Savans* of France, that this work is of the age of the Conquest, but the Abbé de la Rue, has lately revived the discussion of its date, by espousing an opposite opinion, and maintains it was executed in the time of our Henry I. In this he has been ably opposed by our English antiquaries, and it now remains with him to answer their objections. Those persons * whose extensive learning and knowledge renders them competent judges of the authenticity of the tapestry, as it agrees with the most ancient and esteemed writers, all unite in the conviction, that it is circumstantially correct, and that it embraces many events, (doubtless well known at the period of its execution), of which no other record now exists. Amongst them may be noticed the taking of Dinant, and the war between the Duke of Normandy, and Conan Earl of Bretagne, so circumstantially detailed. Whoever wrought the work, appears to have rendered justice to the character of Harold; for the important services he afforded William during the war in Britanny are not noticed by any other existing history.

It is most fortunate that this curious memorial escaped destruction during the Revolution. Its surrender at that period was demanded for the purpose of covering the guns; a priest, however, succeeded in concealing and preserving it from destruction.

I have given you a very long account of the tapestry, which I trust will afford you some little pleasure in the perusal; you

* The Society of Antiquaries of London, are now publishing engravings from the whole of this exceedingly interesting historical record, one-fourth the size of the original.

may believe it has occupied much of my attention in the opportunities I have had of examining it since we came here.

I shall now subjoin the Latin inscriptions as they follow in succession.

Edward Rex.
Ibi Harold Dux Anglorum, et sui milites equitant ad Bosham.
Ecclesia.
Hic Harold mare navigavit, et velis vento plenis, venit in terra Widonis Comitis.
Hic apprehendit Wido Haroldum, et duxit eum ad Belrem, et ibi eum tenuit.
Harold ubi Wido et parabolant.
Ubi nuntii Willelmi Ducis venerunt ad Widonem.
Nuntii Willelmi.
Hic venit nuntius ad Wilgelmum Ducem.
Hic Wido adducit Haroldum ad Wilgelmum Normannorum Ducem.
Hic Dux Wilgelm cum Haroldo venit ad palatium suum.
Ubi unus clericus et Alfgyva.
Hic Willelm Dux et exercitus ejus venerunt ad montem Michaelis.
Et hic transierunt flumen Cosnonis.
Hic Harold Dux trahebat eos de arena.
Et venerunt ad Dol, et Conan fuga vertit.
Rednes.
Hic milites Willelmi Ducis pugnant contra Dinantes, et Cunan claves porrexit.
Hic Willelm dedit Haroldo arma.
Hic Willelm venit Bagias.
Ubi Harold sacramentum fecit Willelmo Duci.
Hic Harold Dux reversus est ad Anglicam Terram, et venit ad Edwardum Regem.
Hic portatur corpus Edwardi Regis ad ecclesiam Sancti Petri Apostoli.
Hic Edwardus Rex in lecto alloquit fideles, et hic defunctus est.
Hic dederunt Haroldo coronam Regis.
Hic residet Harold Rex Anglorum.
Stigant Archiepiscopus.
Isti mirant stella.
Harold.
Hic navis Anglica venit in terram Willelmi Ducis.
Hic Willelm Dux jussit naves edificare.
Hic trahunt naves ad mare.
Isti portant armas ad naves, et hic trahunt carrum cum vino, et armis.

Hic Willelm Dux in magno navigio mare transivit, et venitad Pevenesæ.
Hic exeunt caballi de navibus, et hic milites festinaverunt Hastinga, ut cibum raperentur.
Hic est Wadard.
Hic coquitur caro, et hic ministraverunt ministri.
Hic fecerunt prandium, et hic Episcopus cibum et potum benedixit.
Odo Eps. Willelm, Robert.
Iste jussit ut foderetur castellem at Hestenga ceastra.
Hic nuntiatum est Willelm de Harold.
Hic domus incenditur.
Hic milites exierunt de Hestenga et venerunt ad prelium contra Haroldum Regem.
Hic Willelm Dux interrogat Vital si vidisset exercitum Haroldi.
Isti nuntiata Haroldum Regem, de exercitu Willelmi Ducis.
Hic Willelm Dux alloquitur suis militibus, ut prepararent se viriliter, et sapienter, ad prelium contra Anglorum exercitu.
Hic ceciderunt Lewine et Gyrth fratres Haroldi Regis.
Hic ceciderunt simul Angli, et Franci inprelio.
Hic Odo Episcopus baculum tenens confortat pueros.
Hic est Dux Wilelm.
Eustatius.
Hic Franci pugnant et ceciderunt qui erant cum Haroldo.
Hic Harold Rex interfectus est et fuga verterunt Angli.

LETTER XII.

My dear ——, Bayeux.

I have not yet told you, that the day after our arrival here, we saw a fine raree show. It was the fête of La Sainte Vierge, celebrated with all the pomp of external veneration. The Roman Catholics are a presumptuous people, who take upon them "the mystery of things, as they were God's spies." Yet, I begin to think the priests have but little respect in their hearts, for the mummery they exhibit to the vulgar. In honour of the festival, the women displayed their best attire; the contrast and variety of their Norman caps, and gay dresses, produced a very pretty effect, when they were assembled in the Gothic aisles of the church. On this solemn occasion the military attended; headed by the general of the department, the Marquis de ——: an excellent band played as soon as the troops entered the cathedral; they beat their drums, and executed several waltzes, and lively airs, a kind of music most singular in a place of divine worship. The bishop of Bayeux officiated, dressed in his full pontificals.

When the mass was ended, the procession formed in the centre aisle, while the organ and band played alternately some very charming music. The procession then paraded the town in the following order. First came the verger, dressed in black, holding a pike, and sword; then the sacristan, with a black rod, ornamented at top with a fleur-de-lis; after them a priest, bearing the banner of the Virgin, supported on each side by a little boy. This superb banner was composed of crimson

velvet, wrought with rich ornaments of gold; and in the centre the figures of the Virgin and Child embroidered in silver. Then came three priests, each bearing a high silver cross, followed by a boy dressed in red garments, covered with muslin, and point-lace, who carried the holy water in a vessel of silver gilt. A sumptuously ornamented casket, containing relics, was borne by four canons, in white robes, followed by eight children attired in white and scarlet, each bearing a high lighted taper. A priest, holding a large silver cross, attended by four canons, who bore another casket of relics, next followed in procession. Then came several boys, singing, who held lighted tapers, attended by a priest, most sumptuously attired, carrying the *chasuble* of St. Regnobert. Priests marching two and two, holding books, from which they chaunted; these were dressed in superb robes of gold and silvered brocade. Boys bearing tapers, and singing as before, their long robes trailing upon the ground. Several of these youths were children of great beauty. Priests, as before, followed by a boy dressed in white robes; he walked in a slow and measured step, with an elevated mien and fixed look, his fine flowing hair falling gracefully over his shoulders; he carried a large book, which was supported on either side by two little children. A priest bearing a silver mitre upon a velvet cushion, attended by a youth carrying a taper in a gilt candlestick; this taper was intended to represent the light of faith, but the wind unfortunately blew it out. The venerable Bishop of Bayeux immediately followed; he advanced with slow steps; his tall and majestic figure moved along with a sliding and stately motion; his head was bent towards the ground, and his eyes immoveably fixed upon it; his hands were placed together in the attitude of prayer; he wore a rich mitre of gold upon his head; his fine features appeared to the greatest advan-

tage in this pontifical attire. The bishop has a commanding countenance, with a high forehead, and aquiline nose; his arched eye-brows project considerably beyond his dark and expressive eyes, which bear the look of severity rather than of meekness; he wore over his shoulders a large cope of white satin, finely embroidered, with gold and silver devices, and lined with crimson silk. Beneath this cope, a rich mulberry-coloured velvet dress hung down to his feet, covered as low as the knees, with beautiful point lace; his gloves were white and embroidered; around his neck he wore an ornamented collar, and a fine cross of gold and jewels. Three children supported the long train of the bishop's cope; his majestic figure, and superb attire, so different from the state-dresses of modern times, much resembled the appearance of some antique effigy in Westminster Abbey. After the bishop came a great number of the clergy, all dressed in their robes of ceremony; then followed the general and his troops; and the mayor, attended by the corporation of Bayeux. They were attired in blue, with white silk scarves. Other public functionaries followed, dressed in black, with light-blue scarves. A few nuns, and all the women in the place, brought up the rear of the procession.

The splendour of this exhibition in honour of the Holy Virgin, sumptuous as it is, I am informed, is greatly inferior to what it was before the cathedral was plundered during the Revolution. We were much entertained by the sight; and after it was over, paid our respects to the Marquis De ——, with whom Mr. S. is acquainted. He has resided much in England, and I could not help remarking he seemed a little disconcerted that an Englishman who knew him should see him paraded about the town, in attendance upon the banner of the Virgin.

You will be pleased to hear I pass my time agreeably enough in Bayeux. We have a great many French acquaintance: my kind friend, the Abbé, has introduced us to several families here, to whom we are much indebted for their polite attention; they have very liberally supplied me with books, and having an excellent stock in the library of my friend, I can never be said to want occupation, or diversity of amusement. I have endeavoured to gain all the information I could, relative to the country through which we are to pass in our projected excursion into Bretagne, &c. I shall feel a peculiar pleasure in visiting scenes, rendered so interesting from the illustrious characters and events that have distinguished them, many of which have received an additional lustre by being recorded in the charming pages of Froissart. Thus will a double gratification result from our journey; the present state of customs, &c. in the people of Britanny, and viewing local scenes, and remains of its former grandeur and celebrity.

Amongst our intelligent French acquaintance, we have one who is a poor and fallen gentleman, Monsieur ——: he formerly belonged to the church, but now lives retired, upon the produce of a little farm, amidst his family and books; and, like another Cincinnatus, employs himself in cultivating the earth. We respect him for his learning and his misfortunes. Mr. S. was introduced to this gentleman last year, by Mr. —— the brother of the celebrated Sir —— ——. This recluse (for such he is) appears an extraordinary character; I cannot resist feeling a curiosity to know something of his history, although there is little chance of its being gratified. He is a man of a tall and gaunt figure, nearly sixty years of age; his peculiar countenance, marked by overhanging brows, that bear as strongly the traces

of thought as of time. His whole frame seems shaken by a tremulous agitation of the nerves; and when he enters into argument, or learned disquisition (of which he is peculiarly fond) his nervous agitation increases to so violent a degree, that it is really painful to see him. A few evenings since, a dispute arising concerning Charlemagne, who one of the company termed a barbarian; he was so much incensed at hearing it, that he absolutely groaned with anger and vexation. When argument is not in question, he seems remarkably mild and gentle. His knowledge is extensive; and though indigent in his present fortune, his manners convince me he has not been brought up in rustic or retired life. We play with him sometimes at chess, although he is by no means an agreeable opponent; for he mutters to himself over the game, and appears frequently entirely abstracted, not only from his play, but from all persons and things around him. When he is in one of these moods, little skill is necessary to win the game, which, however, he by no means chooses to acknowledge as lost: "He was careless,—did not pay attention,—made an oversight," or some such excuse; but if, on the contrary, he beats his adversary, it was by some scheme or foresight of his own. This singular man seems to live entirely a recluse: he visits no one, has no connections in the town; but we being strangers here, and English, he has relaxed from his wonted seclusion. The habitation of this man is as singular as himself; he lives at a little farm in a most retired spot in the adjacent country. His wife has been handsome, but, like his son, is a perfect rustic. A small apartment in his house is decorated with several excellent pictures, some few bronzes, and the remains of furniture that once had been elegant. Here also are collected a number of the most valuable French historians, and other works

both rare and interesting. All the apartments in the house, excepting this, exhibit the greatest rusticity. Such a medley is worthy the dwelling of philosophy, that abstracts itself from all but intellectual things.

I must now advert to the mention of a circumstance I should have passed over in silence, but that I apprehend you may have seen some notice of it in the London papers; and should it therein be stated incorrectly, you might very likely imagine Bayeux a most dangerous place to reside in, and indulge unnecessary fears on our account. I allude to the late attempted assassination of Mr. and Mrs. H——, English persons, who now live here. I am acquainted with them both; for they have shown us much kindness since we came; you may therefore believe I can afford you an authentic account of this shocking occurrence. Mr. and Mrs. H——, at the time it happened, resided at a house near St. Vigor, a village adjacent to Bayeux. Mrs. H—— had, about five weeks before, been brought to bed of a son. She was one night sleeping with the child by her side, when she was suddenly awakened by the presence of several men in her chamber. They violently assaulted her husband, who springing from the bed, had the presence of mind to dash out, with his foot, the light that burnt in the apartment, and to this he attributes, in a great measure, the prevention of the meditated assassination. Poor Mrs. H—— was dragged out of bed, with her infant in her arms, and thrown nearly senseless upon the ground. The ruffians struck her husband several violent blows with the bludgeons with which they were armed, and attempted to bind his hands. One villain seized him by the throat, when Mr. H—— extricated himself from his grasp, and deprived him of the use of his hand, by holding his thumb

fast between his teeth. From the repeated blows he received, Mr. H—— was at length left apparently dead upon the floor. During this dreadful assault, Mrs. H—— recovered in some degree the possession of her senses, and had sufficient resolution not to utter a single exclamation, but seized the moment whilst the men were attacking her husband, and fled with the infant: she immediately opened the street-door, in order to seek what assistance she could from some houses near her own. Finding her gone, and considering Mr. H—— murdered, the men feared instant detection, and made a precipitate retreat, without any share of the booty, it was supposed, had induced this attempt.

The next day Mr. H—— was removed to Bayeux, in a most dangerous state, from the blows he had received. A person shortly after called, and desired to speak with the lady; he was a stranger to her, but stated his name to be Serveau, and that, hearing of the shocking occurrence of the previous night, he was desirous of knowing if Mr. H—— was likely to recover, and also to offer her a house he had to let in Bayeux, as he had learned it was not their intention to return to St. Vigor. This man proved to be the principal contriver of the intended murder, and that he was again actually plotting to get Mr. H—— into a house of his own, in order to complete it. He was detected most providentially, from the mark upon his thumb. The whole affair is discovered, and the men are now in prison; no doubt they will be punished as they deserve. The unfortunate wretches engaged with Serveau, were soldiers belonging to the barracks he had intoxicated, by giving them large quantities of brandy, in the church-yard of St. Vigor, before they entered Mr. H——'s house, where he made them drink to his death. It is extraordinary, that Serveau is a man of some property; poverty,

therefore, could not have induced the motive of this crime, which is supposed to have been suggested by Mr. H——'s having sent a servant to enquire several times at a banker's, for an expected remittance from England.

Thus have I given you a brief statement of this atrocious circumstance; but, from all I hear, I am induced to believe, that instances of robbery and murder are less frequent in France than in England: but when they do occur in this country, they are of a more deliberate and cruel nature.

LETTER XIII.

My dear ——, Bayeux.

I should have written to you yesterday, as it was post day, but I was prevented by an invitation to an excellent dinner, which proceeded from the hospitable nature of our good friend the Abbé du ——. We were seated at table by *twelve o'clock*, the usual dining hour in Normandy. The people here rise between four and five in the morning; and as they seldom take any breakfast, unless it be a little fruit and bread, an early dinner is necessary. We did not rise from table till nearly six o'clock, so much conversation was intermixed with the repast. As I was the only foreign female of the party, they treated me with the greatest attention and politeness, and with so much liberality, that it was almost painful; for, lest I should seem to slight their kindness, or dislike their viands, I was obliged to taste of all the good things, with the proffers of which they absolutely overpowered me.

You have often heard of the variety of a Parisian dinner; but Normandy seems to equal Paris itself in the luxuries of the table. The French have a custom singular to us, that of eating melon with their stewed *bouilli:* immediately after the soup, meats, fowls, game, ragouts, stews, made-dishes, and I know not how many other good things followed; the vegetables are generally eaten alone. The last course that we had yesterday, was cold fish without any sauce. My politeness, which had

carried me so far, as to eat of garlick pudding, stuffed with eggs and meat, could not conquer this, or get over my aversion for boiled sorrel mixed with veal. However you must not imagine that I starve in France; for their game, and many of their dishes are very palatable to an English taste. We had a luxurious dessert, consisting of the finest fruits in season, from the Abbé's garden, and many nice preparations of pastry and cream, for which we were indebted to the skilful Victoire, whose cream-tarts might rival those of Bedreddin Hassan, in the Arabian Nights. The coffee and sweetmeats came last; the guests drank half the contents of their cup, and then filled it up with brandy and sugar, which they termed making their *gloria*. Various *liqueurs* followed, such as *cassis*, *fleur d'orange*, *vespetro*, &c., accompanied by *eau de Cologne*, and a splendid gold snuff-box, which was handed round the table. Wine is used as a common beverage; we had yesterday the choice of a dozen different kinds. The excessive heat of this summer renders the French wine very acceptable; for you may satisfy your thirst without endangering your reason. The custom of dining out in Normandy is certainly singular: it is literally going to a friend's house to eat as much as you can; for all the company return home so soon as they rise from table. This custom was yesterday departed from, in compliment to us, as we invited the party to finish the evening, by taking tea with us in the English fashion. They readily granted their company to our solicitation, but would not taste the tea; for the French consider it a medicine only fit for sick people. The Abbé entertained the company with his usual lively conversation, and witty repartees. At dinner his faithful housekeeper stood by his chair, on the right hand, and his

valet on the left. Victoire sometimes joined in the discourse, and the master passed many a joke with his domestics. French servants are remarkably attentive; but they unite, with their respect, that lively familiarity so well described by Moliere, whose old housekeeper, in the resemblance of fidelity, I fancy like the Abbé's Concierge Mademoiselle Victoire.

I need scarcely tell you that we passed a very pleasant day. There is an animation in the French that constitutes the charm of their society, they are never at a loss for a subject of discourse, and give it a peculiar and easy turn, from their vivacity and facility of expression. Nor do they, as it sometimes happens in England, snuff the candles, stir the fire, or have recourse to "It's fine weather," or "I wonder what's o'clock," as a help to fill up the dead pause of conversation, where all have the faculty to hear, but none the talent to speak. Agreeable as many of the French ladies are, I am inclined to prefer the society of the gentlemen; for they are much better educated: and in this point, an individual Frenchwoman is seldom found equal to the generality of our countrywomen. They are scarcely ever so well informed, or so accomplished. The first rudiments of education are frequently neglected; for I have seen, with surprise, very ill-spelt letters, written by ladies, whose fortune, station, and manners would induce you to expect had placed them above the imputation or suspicion of ignorance. In her dress a French lady is gaudy, but never elegant; in housekeeping, cookery seems the first and chief object of her attention. A whole morning is devoted to the preparation of a variety of dishes, even for a private dinner, or family repast; and certainly the culinary science is carried

to a degree of variety and excellence that would have charmed the gluttony of Heliogabalus himself. When Bonaparte called us a nation of shop-keepers, we might, perhaps, well have retorted, by calling the French a nation of cooks.

As this letter is filled with domestic subjects, I have an inclination to finish it, by giving you a peep into a French bed-chamber, which I am certain will be a novelty to you; for mine, that I have already described, partakes so much of English comfort, that it can scarcely be termed French.

You seldom find in these apartments the order or convenience, but above all, the comfort, so conspicuous in English rooms; and I often think how miserable they must be in a cold winter's night. The floor is generally paved with glazed tiles or stone, and destitute of the luxury of carpeting. In the chimney stand iron dogs, to support the wood, coal fires being, I believe, almost unknown in France. The windows are frequently down to the ground, and open in the centre from top to bottom, like a folding door, so that you cannot change the air, without letting a volume of it into the apartment: but these windows are extremely agreeable at this season, and well calculated for summer's heat. The tables are mostly of marble, upon which is placed an ewer, and a wash hand basin, the latter resembling in form, an English pye dish. The curtains of the bed are sometimes finished by a canopy, or else supported by a long pole that projects from the wall. They fall over the head and foot of the bedstead, which is placed lengthways against the walls. In some rooms the bed is stationed within a recess formed to receive it, and a large curtain drawing in front, conceals it

entirely from the view. I must now bid you farewell, I fear you will deem this a very insignificant letter, however, I do my best for your amusement; but, alas! I have no wonders to relate, and you well know there are rogues and fools every where, so that much novelty could not be elicited did I form a subject from either.

LETTER XIV.

Bayeux.

We dined yesterday, my dear ——, with Mademoiselle ——, and passed a very agreeable day. Amongst the party was a Monsieur ——, who is married to a lady of this place: he has served in the army under Napoleon, during several campaigns; but now having given up all public stations, lives retired in the country, devoting much time to studious pursuits. After dinner a walk was proposed, to show us some agreeable scenery in the neighbourhood; we were also taken to a gentleman's house, who has charming gardens, and possesses a rare collection of fine plants, which Monsieur —— expressed much pleasure in showing to us. Although he does not possess any of that elegance of mind which generally accompanies the love of scientific pursuits, he has travelled a great deal, and unites acuteness of observation with extensive knowledge; but his agreeable qualities are rendered even disgusting by his coarse and brutal habits. Although he does not openly express his sentiments, it is evident how much he is attached to the late Emperor; for I was speaking of the King of Rome, when he called my attention to a very high plant standing in the hot-house, and pointed to another that was just bursting through the mould; "Look, madam," said he, "this young plant came from that noble tree, *here* it is in embryo, *there* it flourishes in full growth, and rises above the other plants that surround it. Such shall be the destiny of the son of a prince, if he lives to fill the years of manhood."

Monsieur said no more; but these words were pronounced with an air of triumph, that denoted how much he wished the accomplishment of his prophecy.

We returned to the house, and the infant son and daughter of Monsieur —— joined us. I am inclined to think that children, like wax, take any model into which they are shaped; or, as shadows in a glass, reflect the manners of their parents. Monsieur's son, a boy of seven years old, is, as an infant, what his father is as a man, unfeeling and brutal. His pastime consisted in whipping his little sister with a switch, till she fell a weeping, when we bade him to desist. He turned round to his mother with a pert air, and exclaimed, "Ah, mamma, I should not whip her if the dog were here."—"But can you find no other amusement," said I, "than that of making use of your whip to hurt either dumb animals or little children?"—"I like it," replied the child; "and I would beat you if I could." Monsieur laughed at what he termed the wit and gaiety of his son; and telling him he would make a good soldier one of these days, sent him to play in the next room. I soon observed that this French *militaire* ranked his wife much below himself, and considered her, as he would his horse, a very useful animal, that assists his purposes, and that can sometimes be paraded for ostentation or show, always decorating the creature upon such occasions, with fine and gaudy trappings. In the course of conversation, I casually mentioned the name of the recluse, of whom I spoke in a former letter. "What!" exclaimed Monsieur, "the old revolutionist, the apostate Abbé!" I was astonished at hearing these expressions, and begged Monsieur to explain his meaning, "that," said he, "is easily done; he was formerly an Abbé, when the Revolution broke out he joined in it, and was

one of those who persecuted the priests: He headed a party, and even assisted in stopping some clergy, who were about escaping from France. He did not take their lives, because, I suppose, he knew well enough that the throat of a priest is hardly worth the cutting; but he seized their money, and brought it to the revolutionary tribunal. He bid the plundered people find their way to England as they could, deprived as they then were of all means of subsistence. He got nothing by abandoning the church, but the incumbrance of a wife; for after the Revolution subsided, he found himself deprived of all other property, excepting the little farm, upon which he now lives. Disappointed in his expectations, from that period he has led a sort of life that belongs neither to this world, nor to that wicked one he has so long served; half surly, half repentant, he lives a solitary man, with no prospect but that of being forgotten by his obscurity." My opinion of Monsieur ——, who related these circumstances with some bitterness, determined me cautiously to believe them, until I gained information from a better channel; for I could not help thinking that Monsieur —— was himself a congenial spirit to that which he had just described. Accordingly, I took the first opportunity of repeating all I had heard to my friend, the Abbé Du ——, who confirmed the truth, but in very different terms. He told me, "with a countenance more in sorrow than in anger," that he had indeed been guilty of great faults, yet he hoped that the age, the melancholy, and the retired life of the recluse, were proofs that he really repented of the evils he had both furthered and occasioned. The Abbé Du —— declared, that he felt unwilling to oppress a repentant and fallen man, who, he remarked, had suffered from the loss of all his worldly prosperity, and was suf-

ficiently punished, by the reflections of a conscience that could afford him no consolation. This conduct in the good Abbé, increases my esteem for his character; especially when I reflect how severely he was persecuted by the Revolutionists. I thought the recluse no friend to the priests; for whenever the subject of Revolution has been mentioned, he inveighed against the avarice and wickedness of the clergy, which, he said, helped to bring on the evil: and he always equally exclaimed against the horrors of the time, so that, from his conversation, I had not the least suspicion he could have been a participator of the crimes he deprecated. The Abbé Du —— has a proper and feeling sense, both of moral propriety and Christian mercy; but many of the French would abuse a Revolutionist behind his back, and hug him the next moment if he entered the room.

We went with our friend this morning to see the relics and curiosities preserved in the cathedral of Bayeux. Amongst them is the chasuble or cope, the maniple and stole of St. Regnobert. The chasuble is composed of green silk, spotted with white. The maniple and stole are wrought with threads of silk and gold, richly ornamented with small pearls.* These relics are said to have been taken from the grave of the saint. They are of very great antiquity, and held in veneration by the followers of the Roman Catholic Church. During the Revolution, they were placed in an earthen vessel covered with straw, and concealed in a garden. The devout believers in modern

* The chasuble or cope is the outer garment worn by a bishop or an abbot. The maniple a narrow strip of embroidered silk that is suspended from the wrist. The stole is of the same form as the maniple, but much longer. It is placed round the neck, and the two ends appear in front beneath the chasuble.

miracles say, that although the rain beat upon the vessel, and even penetrated the straw, the habiliments of the saint remained untouched by moisture or injury.

Amongst the curiosities of the cathedral, there is also a box of oriental work, composed of ivory, ornamented with steel devices inlaid with silver, and partially gilt. The peacock (the favorite ornament of the east in works of this kind) is every where introduced in the metal. Around the lock, there is an inscription in the Cufic or ancient Arabic characters, which has been thus read and translated by M. Petit de la Croix: — "*Bis millach au Caouman Cenna coum houcama y aliq fana gro um hou bisisini.*" — "*A nom de Dieu, quelque honneur que nous rendions à Dieu, nous ne pouvons pas l'honorer autant qu'il le merite, mais nous l'honorons par son saint nom.*" It is said that this ivory box was found in the camp of the Saracens, near Tours, after their defeat by Charles Martel; and that it was afterwards presented to Charles the Bald, whose Queen, Hermentrude, consecrated it to the purpose of holding the relics of St. Regnobert, who had cured the king, her husband, of some dangerous complaint.

I see little to admire in the cathedral here. Although Gothic, it is of the very worst kind. The Gothic architecture, so admirably calculated for the introduction of the most ingenious and elegant variety of forms, which pre-eminently mark its character, appears totally wanting in this beauty in the cathedral of Bayeux, — a deficiency which prevails in all the attempts of the present age. From the style of the building, it must have been an erection of the thirteenth century. Around the interior, the walls formerly were painted: upon the ceiling still appears a series of heads representing different bishops. The under-

croft, and a very inconsiderable part of the edifice above it, at the west end, are of the time of Odo, brother to William the Conqueror. The paintings in the under-croft, upon the springs of the arches, representing, placed in the hands of angels, all the musical instruments of the time, are exceedingly curious and interesting.

LETTER XV.

Bayeux.

MANY thanks to you, my dear ———, for the very kind letter I received this morning. I am extremely glad to hear my communications afford you some little amusement, but I think you are very unreasonable in expecting I should write oftener. I had just returned from my walk, when your letter was put into my hands by our friend the Abbé, who, knowing my anxiety to hear from home, very kindly went to the post-office himself, and with great good humour brought me the welcome news. You ask me so many questions, that I know not where to begin answering them. First, then, I have been mindful of all your injunctions, and cannot accuse myself of any neglect on that score. Secondly, we are not I believe immediately returning home, as we have determined upon our tour into Britanny, should the weather prove fine, at present we have nothing but cold days and incessant rain; if this continues, we must abandon our intended excursion, and return to England by Havre-de-Grace, for I have lately been too unwell to think of undertaking so long a journey in such dismal weather; do not let the mention of this render you in the least uneasy, on my account, for I am now much better. During my slight indisposition, I received the most kind and friendly attention from the worthy Abbé, whose character, the more it unfolds, augments in proportion our esteem. He is really an excellent man; what others talk about, he practises; his life being devoted to the exercise of

the most amiable qualities. He is affectionate to his sisters and relatives, kind to his dependents, good to the poor, and beloved by every one; his temper appears uniformly serene and cheerful, unruffled by trifles, he is the last to take or give offence, and is in himself the best example of real goodness, the living proof of its utility. I shall bid him adieu, for the last time we most probably ever meet, with a sincere feeling of regret, and shall ever remember and revere so good a man.

We expect much pleasure from our projected excursion into Britanny. A grammar has been lent to me of the language of the people; many French words have been ingrafted upon it; but it appears, as far as I can judge, very like the Welsh, and I hear that the inhabitants of Britanny, and of Wales, understand each others' tongue. I shall write to you during our journey, and take the opportunity afforded by post towns, of conveying my letters; but should any delay arise, I entreat you do not be uneasy, for travelling in France is as safe as in England. I wish my brother could join us in this little tour, his love of research would, I doubt not, be amply gratified, and he would possess more power than I do of affording you entertainment: as it is, you must not be too severe; and in the absence of talent, accept truth. My time here passes as usual, the morning in solitary occupation, the evening in society. The Abbé pays us a visit every night, after his early supper: he enters the room, carrying his little lantern, dressed in a long black gown, and powdered *perruque;* his plump rosy face smiling with kindness and gaiety. "*Madame est elle visible?*" is the usual salutation, and the prelude of social discourse. We converse on various subjects, with perfect good humour, not excepting the

saints themselves. The Abbé is a sincere Catholic, and speaks with zeal in support of his religion, but without ever trespassing the bounds of good manners in his arguments, or when adverting to the tenets of a faith that differs from his own. He entertained us last night with an account of the monks of La Trappe, whose convent he visited before they took shelter in England, during the Revolution. These monks are now again re-established in France. Some account of an order so singular may be interesting to you; and as I received it from so respectable a channel, I shall not hesitate repeating the particulars.

The convent of *La Trappe* stands in the midst of a lonely forest in the vicinity of Mortagne. The superior of the order, and the brother who acts as porter at the gate, are alone permitted the privilege of speech. There are several persons in the convent, who were men of fortune, and who have thus voluntarily retired from the world to a living grave. Their voice they consecrate to God, and never utter a word, or breathe an audible sound, except when performing the service of the church. They are dressed in a stuff that frets the skin, and seldom take off their gown. They sleep upon straw, scattered on the ground in their apartment; each inhabitant has a separate stone cell. The brothers drink only water, their food the coarsest bread, vegetables and herbs. They make their own apparel, and do every thing necessary in the management or repair of their house. A few books only are allowed, and those of a religious kind.

The monks of La Trappe hold no intercourse with the world; and when once the gates of their convent are closed upon them, they never again hear from their friends, nor are they permitted to see even their relatives or to converse with any living being.

Seven hours each day are spent in prayer, and *twelve* on those of extraordinary humiliation. They retire to rest at midnight; rise again at one in the morning to perform matins. Again they retire to rest till four, when they leave their straw, and go into the church. These customs are observed both in winter and summer. If a brother is fatigued by laborious exertion, he is not allowed to lean against the wall for repose, but must remain in an upright posture. During the severest seasons he must not receive the warmth of a fire for more than a few minutes twice or thrice in the day. When toiling under a broiling sun, he is not permitted to wipe the sweat from off his brows, or to slake his parching thirst even with water, excepting at the appointed time of dinner. Every night he concludes his prayers with begging God's pardon for having performed so little good, and for doing so much amiss during the day,—the only reasonable part, perhaps, of his duty; for what benefit can arise to himself, or to society, from such misery and seclusion.

The monks see without seeing; for they look upon each other, or upon surrounding objects, in such a manner as not to observe them, that they may not receive any impression from external things. When about to perform the office, their eyes are fixed towards heaven, or riveted upon the earth; and, with folded arms and bent body, they stand in mute meditation, expecting the signal that denotes the commencement of the service.

Each monk has a piece of ground assigned to his care, which he is to cultivate during some hours of the day. And here they have likewise a portion of earth allotted for their grave. Every morning, after mass, the solitary monk of La Trappe is employed for an hour in digging the last house of mortality. As soon as

it is completed, he throws in the earth, and begins digging it out again ; and thus continues this daily practice, till he becomes the tenant of the grave prepared by his own hands. If any one of these unfortunate enthusiasts is afflicted with a dangerous malady, he is placed in the sick-ward, and carefully attended. When the hour of his death is evidently approaching, he is taken out of bed, laid upon ashes in the chapel, and there receives extreme unction.

The convent affords the rights of hospitality to strangers or travellers, if they are men ; for no female is admitted within their walls. A stranger may remain three days without being questioned. During that time he is provided for, and attended. But if he continue longer, he is questioned as to his purpose, and desired to depart, or invited to enter upon his probation as a brother. Such an invitation I imagine few persons, whose minds are not perverted by grief or enthusiasm, would accept.

The Abbé and his companions remained at the convent during the allotted three days, and witnessed all their customs and ceremonies. They were allowed to be present at the dinner of the brothers, which passed in profound silence. During the repast, a monk arose and prostrated himself at the Superior's feet, who struck the table with his hand. At this signal, the monk returned to his place. All this dumb show, and the prostration of the monk, denoted that his attention had been engaged by the presence of the strangers, a thing considered sinful in a brother of La Trappe. The blow on the table signified that the offence was forgiven by the humiliation of acknowledgement.

It is really astonishing, that the enthusiasm of a blind and mistaken zeal should carry human beings to such absurd excesses, that men can thus voluntarily devote their lives to useless mi-

sery, as if the most acceptable homage of the Divine Being consisted in the sufferings of his creatures, and in the neglect of every social duty. Perhaps it is even yet more wonderful that there exists a female order of Trappists: that women should voluntarily take upon them the chain of eternal silence, appears almost incredible; nevertheless it is absolutely true. But a fortnight since, a favourite servant of my friend Mademoiselle D —— quitted her kind mistress, and a comfortable home, to become an inferior nun in the gloomy cells of a convent of this order. The cause of her sacrifice is unknown; but, for some time previous to her renouncing the world, she had been melancholy, and went frequently to confession. If any sin oppressed her conscience, it might have been the advice of her spiritual director to expiate her offence by this act of self-devotion.

In Bayeux there is a convent of nuns, who are extremely useful and respectable; their order is very numerous throughout France; they are called *Les Sœurs de la Charité*; their property is given up to the convent when they enter it; but a small part of their funds being appropriated to their subsistence, and the remainder given to those whose wants demand relief. Many ladies of fortune have thus generously resigned their wealth for the benefit of the distressed. Their occupations are teaching the poor, and nursing the sick, to whom they give medicines and necessaries. Many of the nuns have fallen victims to the infectious disorders they have attempted to arrest in their fatal progress. A sister of this order informed me, that during the Revolution, the nuns of charity were at first driven from their asylums, but they were so useful, that the order for their extir-

pation was reversed. The late Emperor, the nun remarked, with some pride, took the warmest interest in supporting and encouraging an order he so much respected, as his own wounded soldiers had experienced the beneficial effects of their care during the late war. The *Hospitaliers*, or Sisters of Charity, are dressed generally in black, with long veils, or in grey gowns, with large white caps. Such useful religious institutions are deservedly esteemed for the sincerity of their professions, and the real utility of their good works.

LETTER XVI.

My dear ——, Bayeux.

I have hitherto omitted describing to you, the costume of the common women in Caen, Bayeux, and the villages of their vicinity, which, although it looks singular at the first view, when the eye is accustomed to it, appears by no means unbecoming: it generally consists of a woollen petticoat, striped with a variety of colours, as red, blue, &c.; an apron also of red or blue. The jacket of the gown is most commonly made of marone, white, black, or red worsted, the long sleeves of which being sometimes perhaps of marone, as far as the elbow, and the lower half of a scarlet colour. A little shawl, (white, or coloured,) with a fringe around it, pinned in plaits upon the back, covers the shoulders. The head-dress called the *Bourgoin*, is the most remarkable and conspicuous part of their attire: it is formed of white stiffly starched muslin, that covers a pasteboard shape, and rises a great height above the head, frequently diminishing in size towards the top, where it finishes in a circular form; two long lappets depend from either side towards the back, and these are often composed of the finest lace. Some of the women have a piece of velvet, which fastens their head-dress under the chin, and others, a riband that crosses the forehead from the cap. Several women, on Sundays or holidays, appear clothed entirely in white, instead of this costume; but still retain their *Bourgoin*, which on such occasions is always composed of fine muslin and lace. The common people, both men and women, invariably

wear wooden shoes, fastened by a leather strap across the foot, with a piece of black or white sheep-skin, upon the instep, to prevent the pressure of the wood galling the skin. When they walk, or run along the pavement, these shoes make such a clatter, that when I first arrived here, I frequently turned round, thinking a horse was immediately coming upon me.

But I must now quit this subject for another, and tell you, that I was walking with an English lady, this morning, who resides here, when I observed some priests coming out of a baker's shop, with the holy water. I asked my companion if she knew what they had been doing there. The lady said, she had no doubt that they had been *sprinkling*. When I enquired the meaning of this ceremony, I found that some of the Roman Catholic clergy practise a system of extortion, peculiar to their church, by going into the shops, and sprinkling the holy water, to give a blessing to the master's trade; for which obliging act they receive a compensation in money. The priests have many other methods of genteel begging. If you go into a church or cathedral and take a chair, even while the mass is performing, they come up to you, and solicit some trifle in payment of your seat; and soon after another priest will present you with a dish, into which you throw whatever money you please. To whom these collected sums are given I do not know; but I dare say they are considered too sacred to be suffered to depart from the church!

The host is the greatest object of Catholic veneration; it is frequently carried to the sick; a bell ringing announces its approach. We once met the priests bearing the host beneath a canopy through Caen, when all persons in the street went down upon their knees while it passed along. The approaching night sheltered us from observation, or we must have bowed, or paid some other token of respect to so sacred an emblem. The ceremonies of the church

of Rome are very interesting to strangers, and offer a wide field for the range of the imagination, by the mystery and grandeur that characterises them.

I saw yesterday the funeral obsequies of a young girl. From her being in humble life, the procession was not very splendid, but its simplicity and appropriate decorations emblematically expressed the youth and innocence of the deceased. The high silver cross, and the holy water, were borne before the coffin, attended by several children bearing lighted tapers. The body was carried by six young women, dressed in white; the chief-mourner, attired in long white robes, walked slowly before them, her head enveloped in a muslin veil, that fell below her feet. The coffin was covered by a white pall, decorated with laurel leaves and flowers, a garland being placed at the head. Several young girls, attired in white, followed the corpse, with their heads bent towards the earth and their hands clasped together. The procession marched slowly in this order, while the priests chaunted the funeral anthem. An apparent veneration towards departed friends, prevails all through France; although, I believe, there is as much, if not more, ostentation in it than sincerity, funeral preparations being a kind of public exhibition.

It has been considered by many sensible persons, that ceremonies in religious worship are extremely useful and necessary, from the powerful impression they are calculated to make upon the mind: this may in a great measure be true; for it is a well-known fact, that no missionaries have ever succeeded in making so many proselytes as those deputed by the church of Rome. But to converts, the mystical consecration, and the imposing mass, are objects of novelty that excite curiosity and wonder, and, by the impression that they make upon the uninformed mind, contribute towards

the facility of conversion: they place an entire faith in those instructors, who, by the splendour of their religious pageants, seem beings of a superior order. But to persons who, from their infancy, have been accustomed to the same forms, the same splendid and monotonous exhibitions, the impression wears off, and ceases to become imposing by frequent repetition.

I am inclined to think that the Roman Catholics consist of three classes, the weak, the hypocritical, and the enthusiastic. The weak are ever the easy tools of the crafty: uncertain in themselves, devoid of solid reflection, with little power to think, or act alone, they give up even what share of reason they may possess, to the guidance of others, who rule despotically, by holding forth threats, or promising pardons. The hypocritical find their interest advanced by imposing upon others, that which they secretly condemn, or despise, and turn to account of selfish feelings, the folly and errors of their fellow beings. It is really dreadful to reflect upon the serious mischief a bad man may achieve, who is cloaked in the garb of a priest. I have heard, with many confirmations of their truth, instances I could not repeat: a confessor knows all the secrets of almost every family and every individual, within the sphere of his dominion. If he happens to be a good man, little mischief need be apprehended; but if on the contrary he be an artful, designing, or wicked hypocrite, the most dreadful evils sometimes ensue. The penitent, seeking pardon and consolation, unburthens the secrets of a heart, subdued perhaps by fear, or governed by passion; the confessor seizes such moments when the judgment yields to the feelings, and works to his own purposes the enervated mind of the young, the ignorant, or the weak; and frequently renders the unfortunate victim the tool of his own private resentments or purposes.

So sacred is the trust of confession, that if the most detestable crimes are acknowledged, they are nevertheless concealed: one secret betrayed would ruin the confessor; he would be displaced from his office. It was Louis the Fourteenth, I believe, who once asked a priest, if a penitent confided to him the knowledge of a plot that was forming, to take away the life of his king, if he would inform him of the danger; to this question the confessor replied, "No, Sire; I would throw myself before your majesty to "ward off the blow; but, were you certain to fall by the hand of the "assassin, I would not betray the confession." Can such principles be consistent with the precepts of Christianity; and is not the silent knowledge of a great crime almost a participation in its guilt?

Of the enthusiastic professors of the Romish church, the number perhaps predominates. Superstition, the prevailing character of their faith, by its mystical injunctions and belief, subverts the reason, and gives to the imagination that unlimited power, which should be tempered by the judgment. A mind so governed readily adopts that creed which favours its own bias, or that tends to excite enthusiastic feelings, and easily receives those impressions that a sane judgment would reject. With the followers of the Romish church, the Virgin Mary seems to be more considered and worshipped, than even the Almighty; and the old rags appertaining to the saints are deemed as objects of greater veneration than the majestic works of God; but such superstition does not entirely prevail: the men in France are generally well educated; a familiar knowledge of the Latin tongue being common all over the Continent, it is frequently spoken. Young men are not only taught the languages, but are likewise accustomed to exercise their reason in the studies of philosophy and science;

consequently, many whose education has strengthened and enlarged the powers of their mind, no longer bend to the dominion of that night of superstition, with which Catholicism shrouds Christianity; they shake off the yoke, and, too frequently confounding the errors of the church with the religion it deforms, remain with no other belief, than that which arises from the mere avowal of common sense, — the existence of a Supreme Being. Thus, then, a fourth class exists, who are absolute Deists; and having no ties superior to fallible moral virtue, they are the first to join in any public disturbance. The mild precepts of Christianity forbid tumult and discord; and it will ever be found, in states, that the selfish and unprincipled leaders of rebellion are generally those, who fear no sacred law, and no Divine retributory justice.

Such were the Revolutionists; the horrors into which they plunged this unhappy country are inconceivable: not a town, or a village, but furnishes some new anecdote of outrage and barbarity. The Revolutionists were like a legion of fiends let loose to prey on France: they made war alike with the living and the dead, and endeavoured to destroy every trace of art, every example of virtue, with human blood. They attempted to extirpate, at the same time with the monarchial government, the very name of king, and all records of their history. Philosophy veiled in false colours the most destructive principles, and opened the way for an absurd system of equality in rank and possession: every one endeavoured to be superior, no one submitted to be subordinate; confusion and riot prevailed; that man who had most talent, gained the greater power, and became the worst of all tyrants,—he who first tramples on the laws, and then on those who helped him in their destruction.

The barbarous manner in which the French Revolution was conducted, will be viewed by all posterity as an eternal blot in the history of mankind. The rude and uncultivated savage, who feeds sometimes on human blood, destroys alone the prisoner he has gained in war; but here, in the very bosom of Europe, in a country enlightened by Christian knowledge, arts, and literature, the most accursed scenes of refined wickedness were perpetrated upon fellow-citizens. I should blush to owe my birth to a nation so stained with guilt.

Many causes have been assigned for the revolution. Amongst them, the overgrown authority and usurpation of the Church is generally believed to have contributed largely towards it. So numerous were religious institutions, that in many towns in France there were sometimes more than twenty convents. All persons who took upon them the monastic habit, gave up their possessions to the religious houses of which they became members. The convents also inherited their estates, when they were deceased. Thus, more than half the lands of France belonged to the drones of civil society. The labourer and mechanic toiled hard to gain a bare subsistence, and even a part of his scanty earnings were devoted to the church. The evil gained its utmost height, and, by its overgrown enormity, entailed a signal vengeance. The convents fell, never to rise again: the churches were torn down, plundered, or devastated, and their wretched inhabitants immolated by the unsparing fury of the sword. The idle avarice, the vices, and the hypocrisy of the professors of religion, were blindly considered as arising from religion itself. The book of life was declared false and worthless; blasphemy and revilings attended all sacred things. Atheism, the dreadful instigator of

bloodshed and rapine, was substituted in the place of truth; and the eternal sleep of death held forth as the fearless encouragement of guilt. A mock temple was erected to the deluded reason of madmen, and a prostitute chosen its presiding deity.

LETTER XVII.

My dear ———, Avranches.

I received your last letter in the midst of the hurry attendant on packing up and taking leave of our French acquaintance, so that I really had no leisure for writing, or I certainly would have answered yours, before we quitted Bayeux. The bidding adieu to our kind friend the Abbé, to whom we are bound in gratitude, as well as esteem, was indeed a painful moment; to gain friends only to know their value, and feel their loss, is in my opinion an acquisition more to be shunned than desired. The Abbé's kindness continued to the hour of our departure, and seemed, if possible to increase the nearer that hour approached; he felt there was little chance of our ever meeting again in this world, but appeared reluctant to speak it; when we expressed our hopes that he might perhaps visit England, and assured him we would not come again into France, without seeing him, he shook his head and replied,—"No, I fear we shall never meet again; I am "an old man, and must not look for many years; I shall never "travel; here was I born, and here shall I die, but you are "young, and may see many changes. If the prayers of so hum-"ble a servant of God as I am can avail, they will be sincerely "offered for your welfare. May God bless and direct you both; "may he make you happy in this world, and guide you by the "right path, to immortality in a better." We were extremely affected by the kind and feeling manner in which the worthy man bestowed his benediction and farewell; Victoire likewise expressed her sorrow for our departure, and hugging Mr. S.,

gave him three salutes on the cheek, agreeably to the French custom. The servants came about us, and shook us heartily by the hand. My poor Madeleine followed us to the coach in tears, and so earnestly begged me to take her to England, that I felt sorry to deny her request. There is always a melancholy feeling attendant on taking leave; besides the privation we sustain in quitting our friends, the reflection that we leave those persons with whom we have held intercourse or friendship, perhaps never to meet again, until we have all shared the common lot, and then, that such a meeting may be in that unknown kingdom, now enveloped in the dark mysteries of futurity, has something so awful in it, and places before our view in such plain characters, the bounded power of our agency, and the uncertain tenure of our existence, that must both pain and depress the firmest spirit; yet faith,—such faith as is necessary perhaps to salvation,—dispels these clouds which may darken the mind of the philosopher, but should not that of the true Christian.

It was nine in the morning, when we quitted Bayeux; about noon we passed through the fine forest of Cerisy, where they frequently hunt the wild boar. The forests in some parts of France, are very extensive: many are still peopled by "their old inhabitants the wolves;" they are however daily diminishing in number, for a reward of two Napoleons is given to any person, who produces before the mayor of a town the head of one of these animals. In the afternoon we arrived at the beautifully situated town of St. Lo, in the midst of a fine wooded country. St. Lo has an elegant cathedral. The spire, like a church we observed in Caen, is pierced with *quatre foils*. The town is piled on hills, in the most picturesque manner; the massy towers and walls of its defence in feudal times still exist, in some parts entire. Towards

the extremity of the town, they stand upon the verge of a lofty and perpendicular rock, from whose heights it is appalling to look down. After admiring the wild and picturesque beauty of St. Lo, we again got into the diligence, when the tranquillity of our journey was interrupted by a most violent quarrel that arose between two of our fellow travellers. You do not know, I believe, the order of stage-coach journeying in France: there is no pushing and shoving for places, as in England; no "Ma'am, that's my seat" — "Sir, I can't ride backwards," — or any of the little pleasant altercations such things produce, till you have half-a-dozen people, striving together to get on one side the coach: no, all this trouble is spared you, by the precise nook you are to occupy being appointed when your place is booked. In number 1. sat an officer, who came from Caen; we occupied the following numbers: the rest of the company getting out at St. Lo, an old beau and his housekeeper came in, that being the place where they had been booked. The old beau, whose powdered hair and upright curls arose above a most extraordinary visage, reminded me of one of those cracker stuck figures, that righteous little Protestants burn in memory of Guy Fawkes. He insisted the gentleman should turn out, and give place to him in snug number 1.; the officer pleaded having travelled all the way from Caen, and positively refused to yield; the old beau grew most violent in his wrath, and words run so high, that every moment I expected they would come to action. Did you ever see a Frenchman in a passion? If you have not, it would be vain attempting to describe it. Monsieur beat his cap, grasped his hair, accompanying these acts with such gestures, such expressions, that I half suspected we had got a madman into the coach; but after all, his threatenings proved like the explosion of a fire-work, that makes a loud noise, but does no mischief. *Apropos*, before I quit the subject of the diligence, sup-

pose that I describe to you a French postillion ; a person of considerable importance to the traveller, and the *Femmes de Chambre* at the inns, as he passes along. Imagine, then, a gay, brisk young fellow, with a well-powdered head; his hair plaited into a thick club tail, that stands out behind, and keeps time to the motion of the horses as they jog on; his blue jacket turned up with red, and well set with buttons. He vaults, with great alacrity, into the saddle, and thrusts his legs into a pair of buckets, which the jack-boots very much resemble. As he enters or quits a town, he smartly cracks his short whip with incredible celerity, whose loud and startling sounds ring in your ears as you pass along.

Quitting St. Lo, we arrived in the evening at Coutances, where we remained two days, and amused ourselves with viewing the town, cathedral, &c. The cathedral is extremely beautiful, not remarkably rich in its decorations, but of that plain kind which peculiarly characterises the early Norman architecture, and the most elegant specimen I have yet seen in Normandy.

Coutances is not only celebrated for the fine country in which it is situated, but also for the personal charms of its female inhabitants. The market, where the young girls assemble with their baskets of fruit, &c. really presents a variety of loveliness and beauty seldom witnessed, I believe, in any country: for the women have both remarkably fine features and complexions.

We made several attempts to draw in the neighbourhood; but the rain that fell in torrents, drove us from our occupation, and compelled our return to the inn. Mr. S. made a drawing of the singular costume of the women of Coutances. This consists of a white muslin cap, that rises considerably above the head, and has two several borders, which, as the crown of the cap, are neatly plaited. These borders, at least a foot in width, are very

stiffly starched, and project (turning upwards) from either side of the head.

We left Coutances, and continued our route for Granville, arriving there in safety on the evening of the 26th of September. When we entered the inn at Granville, I at first imagined some mistake had occurred in the person who directed us to it; for I could not suppose such a dirty habitation intended for the reception of respectable travellers; and I found another English family who were equally surprised on the same account. Granville is a poor seaport town. The rain that had fallen incessantly, rendered the streets so filthy, that we literally waded through mud, in passing along them.

In this place we were detained two days, before we could obtain any conveyance to Avranches. In the want of better occupation, we amused ourselves with walking upon the beach, looking through a telescope, and counting sea-gulls and porpoises, like poor Londoners, caged up in a seaport town. To add to our miseries, it rained hard nearly the whole of each day. When we ventured out, the mud was so intolerable, that I was obliged to purchase a pair of wooden shoes. The country people even run in these *sabots* with great ease; but being unaccustomed to them, I should have fallen at every step, had I not been supported by Mr. S.'s arm.

The girl of whom I bought my wooden shoes was extremely beautiful, and addressed me with so much natural politeness and good-breeding, that many a Quixotic knight would have taken her for a princess in disguise. The women of Granville wear a dress peculiar to their town. It is extremely becoming, and somewhat resembles, in front, the turban of an eastern Rajah. Their long cloak, of white woollen, with a scolloped hood and border falls over the figure in the most elegant folds.

The beauty of this girl was greatly enhanced by the excessive neatness of her attire. With some difficulty I induced her to permit Mr. S—— to draw her portrait; and she alone consented, on condition that it should not be shown to any person in the town. She threw aside her cloak, the better to display her scarlet handkerchief, and the little gold cross that hung pendant round her neck. She seated herself by my side in the dirty room she inhabited, which formed a striking contrast to the gentility and neatness of her person. While Mr. S—— was drawing, she gratified her curiosity by questioning me respecting England; and very pertinently asked, if England was such a fine place, and the people so happy there, what could induce so many of them to wander about France? When I replied, "A desire to gratify their curiosity," she said, "Curiosity was a thing never satisfied; and that God intended all people to rest content in the land where they were born."

We bid adieu to our pretty Granvillese, and once more returned to the dirty inn, where it became quite an occupation to prevent my clothes, or any thing I had, from touching the floor. The covering of the wretched bed on which I slept, was black with dirt, yet were the pillow cases trimmed with point. Trifling as this may appear, it is an inconsistency that characterises the French in more important things. Mademoiselle, who sells baubles from her basket, and lives on pottage, will have her Bourgoin head-dress trimmed with fine lace; and Monsieur L'Artiste des Perruques, whose entire wardrobe rests upon his back, will frequently display a hand adorned by more than one ring, and offer his pinch of snuff from a silver box.

But I must now return to the mention of Granville, a town celebrated for the very gallant and spirited attack made by the





Vendéens, during the dreadful epocha of the Revolution. It appears from the account of the war, in the interesting memoirs of Madame de Larochejacquelein, that the English government had given promises of assistance to the Royalists. Supported by the expectation of these succours (that proved vain), the Vendéens attacked Granville, and commenced their operations at nine o'clock at night, continuing them during 36 hours, when the slaughter of their men, and the fire that poured upon them from the ramparts, obliged their general, Henri de Larochejacquelein, to order a retreat. Many of the Vendéen chiefs, particularly Henri, Cathelineau, and Lescure, performed throughout the war, deeds of such heroic valour and disinterested self-devotion, that entitles them to as glorious a memory, and as unfading a wreath, as any which the suffrages of mankind have devoted to the assertors of Greek or Roman liberty. La Vendée is sacred ground; for the peaceful and undisciplined inhabitants of La Vendée gave up their homes, their dearest ties, their all in the cause of virtuous freedom; at a time when oppression, tyranny, or servile submission were no longer considered a reproach, when vice stood paramount, and to bow to her yoke, became the surest means of self-preservation. The Vendéens, "'gainst giant vice, with giant vigour rose," with their blood they attempted her subversion, and but failed in their purpose when they failed in their existence. The interest I felt in the recollection of their sufferings, their victories, and their fall, induced me to learn such particulars as I could of their attack on Granville, an engagement but slightly mentioned by Madame de Larochejacquelein, as she was not on the spot at the time; and I shall here repeat some circumstances relating to it, that I believe have never yet been made public, and that, I doubt not, will prove interesting to you.

It must be remembered that the Vendéens were accompanied in their marches, by their women, children, and the defenceless and aged of their province, who dared not quit the army, without being certain of meeting death from the blues, who ravaged the country.

The Vendéen women not only exhorted their husbands and their kindred to deeds of valour, but frequently, warmed by the enthusiasm of self-devotion, caught the spirit they diffused, and performed actions that reflect honour upon that sex who were never designed by nature for hostile purposes. Surely then the glory is greater, when, in defiance of their nature and their habits, they devoted themselves to the common cause, and shared the fate of a husband, a father, or a son.

In the attack on Granville, the Royalists hoped the most from the position they had taken, along a flat shore which the tide had left; but here they were not only exposed to the fire of cannon from the ramparts, but also from some republican vessels that came into the port. Thus hemmed in, and beset on every side, they were short of ammunition, when several Vendéen women, (who had accompanied the army from Avranches, where the greater number remained with the aged and infirm,) evinced an intrepid alacrity, collected stones from off the beach, and assisted in loading the cannon. A female, mounted on horseback, and waving in her hand a white flag, rode from rank to rank, encouraging the people, and exhorting those few of her own sex who were present to lay aside the weakness and timidity of women, and to trust in that God who best knew the justice of their cause.

It was soon discovered that a party of the republican blues were marching round to the beach, by a pass in the cliffs. The heroic Vendéen immediately turned her horse towards the spot,

and waving her banner, conjured those who trusted in God and loved their King, to follow her. She then gained the pass, and heading her party, stood firm in its defence. The first revolutionist who advanced, cursed her with bitter oaths, and saying he would bring her from her horse, discharged the contents of his musket at her head; the ball missed its aim, and passed over the shoulder of the undaunted heroine, who waved her flag, and accompanied the action with emphatically exclaiming, *Vive le Roi.* Again they fired, and again the shot missed its aim, wounding alone the air through which it passed; once more she raised herself upon the horse, and again exclaimed, "*Vive le Roi.*" Such an heroic contempt of danger, impressed even the blood-hounds that pursued her; their leader ordered the firing to cease, and directed she should be made prisoner; this was easily accomplished: what became of her afterwards is not certainly known, and I could only learn, that it was believed she had most probably perished upon the scaffold of the Royalists at Nantes.

We left Granville, and, after travelling through a very beautiful country, gradually mounted a steep ascent; and winding round a road cut in the sides of the hill, at length gained the lofty summit of this mountainous declivity; where stands the delightfully situated town of Avranches.

Of the cathedral, there remains but a few broken arches and pillars, with a heap of stones. The destruction of this building originated from the revolutionists, who, taking off the lead that covered the roof, in order to convert it into shot, the weather, in process of time, destroyed the building. Here Henry the Second did penance for the murder of Beckett. A flat stone, with a cup engraved upon it, still marks the spot of kingly humi-

liation. The site of this cathedral commands a most delightful and extensive view, remarkable for a combination of imposing objects. The day was unfavourable, but the gleams of sun that broke from time to time through the thick clouds, and threw a transient brilliancy upon the distant scenery, gave a very striking effect to the bold features of the landscape. The broken arches of the cathedral, upon the summit of the eminence, form the foreground of the scene; the valley below, covered with woods and fine verdure, appears far distant, extending for many miles. The town winds round the hill in gentle descent; in the bottom the river serpentines through many branches, till it falls into a large arm of the sea. The thick woods grow to the extreme verge of the shore, and form a beautiful contrast to the wide expanse of waters, in which they seem to lave their branches. Beyond, in the midst of the sea, arises 400 feet above the surface of the water, the majestic rock of Mount St. Michael, and near it another, but smaller rock, called the Tombalaine. In the distant and blue horizon appears the long and extending land of Britanny, mingling with the surrounding atmosphere, from which it is alone distinguished by a faint and uncertain line, that, like the prospect of our future years, impresses the mind with a deeper interest from its distant and impenetrable form. Mount St. Michael is a league in circumference; in some parts the rock is perpendicular; it is flooded entirely at high water, but when the tide is out, the rock may be approached by the sands; some danger, however, attends the passage to those who are not perfectly well acquainted with the track, as many quicksands intercept, where travellers have frequently been lost.

There is a small town on Mount St. Michael. The castle,

which stands at the top, is accessible by steps cut in the solid rock. In the year 708, St. Aubert, Bishop of Avranches, here first erected the chapel dedicated to St. Michael; in 966, Richard the first Duke of Normandy, established a convent of monks of the order of St. Benoit, and in 1024, Richard, the second Duke of Normandy, built the church, which still exists. The provisions that supply the fortress, are sent up in a basket drawn by a machine. Tradition says, that there was in this castle an obligatory, or concealed trap-door, where, in feudal times, persons were taken, whom the state directed should be secretly put out of the way. Under pretext of showing them the castle, they were conducted into a remote chamber, there they soon met their destined fate, for chancing to step upon the concealed door, they were precipitated into the abyss, many hundred feet below. They still exhibit at this fortress the sword and shield of St. Michael, and some cannon left by the English, when they made a fruitless attempt to take possession of the rock. Here it was that in former times, the kings of France and the dukes of Britanny made frequent pilgrimages, and performed penance at the shrine of St. Michael.

We had a letter of introduction to an English family residing at Avranches, who received us with great kindness and hospitality. The ladies regretted that I had not arrived a few days sooner, to witness the ceremony of a nun's taking the noviciate veil, in the convent of Benedictines here. All the English families in Avranches, were present on this occasion. The ladies gave me a long account of the ceremony, which excited a good deal of interest, as the nun insisted upon taking the veil in direct opposition to the will of her family. She was young, handsome, and the child of rich parents, who are greatly distressed by her loss.

When a young woman is about receiving the noviciate veil, (or in their phrase, is to become the spouse of Christ,) she enters the church in a bridal suit, indicative of her still belonging to the world. This novice appeared dressed in white satin, her head adorned with pearls and ostrich feathers. She was attended by a little girl, who acted as her bride's-maid, attired also in white, and wearing a garland of flowers upon her head. The novice took her place next to the Lady Abbess, in the most conspicuous part of the church. Towards the conclusion of the service, she retired, and was shortly after re-conducted to her seat by the superior, but her gay dress was now changed, for she had cast off the world, and in its stead she wore the black attire of the nuns, carrying a taper in her hand, an emblem of the light of faith. The priests and sisters advanced towards the altar, the novice was then presented to the nuns, saluting each in token of sisterly affection; lastly, the abbess embraced her, encircling her waist with a broad leathern girdle, and threw over her head the white veil. The novice then advanced to the altar, and kneeling before it, still holding her taper, she took the vows of chastity, poverty, and humility. The priest gave her the benediction; after which she arose, and putting aside her taper, fell upon her face before the altar; an action that denoted her being dead to the world. She remained thus extended, and without motion, covered by her long white veil, when twelve female children, dressed in white, with garlands about their heads, brought little baskets of flowers, which they strewed over the novice in token of performing her funeral rite. After thus lying extended during some time, she was at length raised up, and reconducted to her seat. The ceremony concluded by a sermon being preached on the merit of her sacrifice. I must now bid you

farewell. We leave Avranches to night at twelve o'clock, for St. Malo. The English ladies here are full of concern for me, they threaten me with bruises, and almost broken bones, in the journey; so terrible I hear is the road we have to pass. Adieu. I shall write again from Rennes.

LETTER XVIII.

Rennes en Bretagne.

I should, my dear ——, have written to you immediately upon our arrival here, had I been capable of the least exertion, but what with the fatigue of such long journeys, almost without rest, and the joltings we have endured by the way, for the two first days after our arrival I could really hardly move. Surely never were there worse roads, than those we have passed: if they be a specimen of what we have yet to come, I much doubt if we return home without being maimed. Sometimes a sudden jerk threw us from our seats, or tossed our heads against the roof of the carriage, which I never expected to get here without breaking down.

I wrote my last letter to you from Avranches. We quitted that charming place at midnight, and breakfasted the next morning at Dol, en Bretagne, where an entirely new scene presented itself; for the dirt and misery of the people exhibited a state of existence so comfortless and wretched, that I could scarcely fancy them the inhabitants of a civilised country. Dol is an ancient Gothic town: the shops still remain in their original state; their Gothic fronts, supported by short massy ornamented columns, that unite with each other, and form the streets into colonnades. We continued our route, and the carriage after passing through an arm of the sea entered St. Malo, a fine town, adjacent to the island of Jersey. It is surrounded by ramparts and strong towers, that still remain entire; these were erected more than four hundred years since: they exhibit a very perfect specimen of

the strongly fortified, and walled towns of former ages. The view from St. Malo is peculiar, and striking; little rocks and fortified islands appear in the midst of the sea, as far as the eye can distinguish distant objects. It was five o'clock in the afternoon, when we once more found ourselves in a comfortable inn at St. Malo; and at three in the morning we again commenced another tiresome journey. At noon we passed the charmingly situated town of Hedée, where, upon a high rock rising amidst the finest woods, stand the remains of a castle, that formerly belonged to the Duchess Anne. It was here that I may say, I had the first view of the people of Bretagne, in all their native wildness; for the carriage rested in the market-place, and gave me full time to consider the strange appearance of those who were to us a new race of beings. The wild look which more particularly characterises the men, is greatly increased by their wearing their hair long and loose; they have a most uncivilised and rude air, and seem in a state of extreme poverty. A boy came up to the carriage, and appeared anxious to induce us to buy the fruit he held in a basket; as we could not speak to him in his own language (the Patois), we gave him a small piece of money, intending to purchase some fruit; he looked surprised, and would actually have emptied the whole contents of his basket in return, could we have taken it. I afterwards found, that this would have been less than the value of what we gave him, so extremely cheap are all kinds of fruit and provisions in Britanny; but this is of little advantage to the people, their labour being paid in the same proportion. We continued our fatiguing journey from Hedée, and at five in the afternoon, arrived at Rennes, after having had very little rest from travelling in such dreadful roads, during the last eight-and-forty hours. I was so tired that I could scarcely

alight from the voiture, and really dread the thoughts of such another journey.

Rennes, the capital of Upper Britanny, is a large and very agreeable city, the streets much wider than those of Paris, and remarkably clean. The town is in some parts modern and well built; in others there is a variety of most ancient houses, generally built of wood, curiously carved, and highly interesting, from their architectural ornaments, and scenic character. The busy groups of females washing their linen in the river, adds greatly to the lively effect of the many picturesque objects, that would afford such admirable subjects for the pencil. The cathedral, which was modern, and of Grecian architecture, with several churches, were destroyed during the Revolution, and now present in ruins but indications of their former grandeur. A few convents still exist: that of St. Ives, (at present inhabited by a sisterhood of Hospitaliers,) is the most ancient. A tallow-chandler's magazine, or store-house occupies a chapel, which, to judge from the Gothic ornaments, the beautiful painted glass, and the few broken arches that still remain, must have been a most elegant religious edifice; indeed the Revolution seems to have spared nothing in Rennes, but the old houses, that were too poor to excite a spirit of devastation and plunder. It is really a lamentable sight to travel through a country, where every town exhibits the finest works of art mouldering into decay, not by the progress of time, but from the unsparing hand of civil devastation. Rennes, the ancient Condate, was so important a city in the time of Cæsar, that he placed in it a garrison, under the command of Crassus. The towers and walls that still remain in some parts entire, are of great antiquity; modern houses are here and there built upon their massy ruins. Several of the particular towers and entrances so noted in history, during the siege that Rennes sustained from

John of Gaunt, may be yet traced or seen, of these port St. George, is perhaps the most perfect.

A large crucifix has lately been erected in one of the principal streets, where persons are continually praying. Crosses are very commonly placed by the road-side in France, but more particularly in Britanny, for the benefit of those pious travellers, who may feel disposed to stop and pray during their journey. I observed suspended at the base of the large crucifix in Rennes, a variety of little wax figures, representing children, arms, heads, and different parts of the human body: upon inquiring into the meaning of these suspended figures, you may imagine how much I was surprised, on learning that they were the offerings of sick persons; for it is a custom with the followers of the church of Rome, if they have a disease in their arms, legs, &c. or if one of their children is afflicted with sickness, to purchase a little waxen image of an infant, or of the same limb, as that which is diseased, and suspending it at the foot of the cross, or at the shrine of a patron saint, they offer up prayers for their restoration to health. This custom is undoubtedly a remain of paganism; the Greeks and Romans in cases of sickness, used the same observance. I remember having seen in the British Museum the breast of a female, carved in marble, that had been the offering of a sick person to the heathen gods.

After examining the little wax figures, we walked to the convent of St. Ives, and my curiosity prompted me to seek an interview with the abbess. This was a very easy matter, as the sisters took young ladies, either French or English, to board and educate. Accordingly, I pulled the bell, determined to make an enquiry relative to their terms an excuse for my visit. A nun spoke to me through the little grating, and giving me a key, de-

sired me to proceed along the gallery, and unlock the first door, begging me not to take out the key, and to be sure and shut it after me as soon as I should be in the apartment. I obeyed her injunctions, and found myself in a lofty room, that received light from some iron-barred windows immediately below the ceiling: on the opposite side a large iron grating was covered within the bars by a black curtain. Several passages from the Testament were inscribed upon the walls. A solitary table and chair constituted the whole furniture of the room. I read all the texts, looked at the grating, and sat down, wondering no person appeared, as the nun had assured me I should be immediately received by the mother, for so she called the abbess. After waiting very patiently for a considerable time, and no one appearing, I thought of making an unceremonious retreat; but found, to my surprise, that I was fairly a prisoner, for there was no handle to the lock, or any means of opening the door within this apartment. After waiting thus incarcerated more than half an hour, the curtain began to move, and I perceived through the iron bars a figure dressed in white, enveloped with a black veil. I presently understood, that this was the Lady Abbess, who, I conjectured, to increase the awe of her appearance, had kept me so long expecting her coming. She made me sit down before she unveiled, and was polite enough to say, she was glad to see me, even if I had no other motive than that of coming to pay my respects to *the superior of such a convent as hers.* She then threw up her veil, and exhibited the countenance of a very cross old lady, who looked more accustomed to scolding than devotion. But, as the law of physiognomy is sometimes rather hard judging, I determined to observe her manner, ere I set down the sharp nose, and contracted brows, as the infallible marks of a scold.

Before I left her, I was however confirmed in my physiognomical observations; for the excessive sharpness, and peremptory examination of the mother relative to who I was, &c. convinced me she did not rank amongst the order of gentle devotees. She told me a little of her own history, her misfortunes in the Revolution, and, amongst other things, averred, that the Virgin Mary had twice appeared to her during her sufferings for the faith. "The Virgin Mary, madam!" said I, not a little surprised. "Aye, the Holy Virgin," replied the old lady; "the blessed protector of religious houses; the mother of our Lord, by whose side the nuns will sit in heaven, and the abbesses next to him on the right hand." This was quite enough for me: I soon bid her good morning, and went away, reflecting how well the old lady had settled the precedency of heaven. But I find such visions and privileges are very common with the superiors of religious houses.

Rennes is so celebrated in history for having been besieged by "old John of Gaunt, time honoured Lancaster," and likewise for the gallant defence made by the famous Bertrand du Guesclin, Comte de Longueville, in the year 1356, that I should be perhaps depriving you of some amusement to pass over the event in total silence, more especially when I reflect that unless you have made the history of Britanny, a particular study, Bertrand du Guesclin may be a hero, with whose achievements in this province you are little acquainted.

The English, after the battle of Poictiers, became so formidable in France, that the safety of the whole kingdom was endangered. The Duke of Lancaster, then chief of the English forces, accompanied by Philippe of Navarre, earl of Evreux, held all Normandy in his possession. The disasters of the realm presented a favourable opportunity for the English forces to pass

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into Britanny, in support of the young Count de Montfort, who laid a contested claim to the duchy. De Montfort had espoused the youngest daughter of Edward the Third, King of England, who warmly aided his cause. Such was the state of things, when the dauphin regent of France, distracted with the disasters of his country, could not fulfil his engagement of sending immediate assistance to his ally Charles, Count de Blois. This was, therefore, a favourable crisis for the house of Montfort. Rennes, the capital of Britanny, was in possession of the rival prince, Charles. The Duke of Lancaster determined to profit by the opportunity, and lay siege to the city without delay. The Lord of Penhoüet marched into Rennes, to prepare for its defence. Bertrand du Guesclin who purposed joining him arrived too late; for the gates of the city were closed. He did not, however, remain inactive, but watched the motions of the English army, harassing their troops in a manner so prudent and vigilant, that his enemies could neither surprise or take him prisoner. In one of these skirmishes, Du Guesclin succeeded in making captive the Baron de la Pole, an English knight. The French soldiers, upon this occasion, had a saying, that "*L'aigle Bretonne avoit plumé la poule Anglaise.* * Bertrand offered De la Pole his liberty without ransom, on condition that he would procure from the Duke of Lancaster a free permission that he and his followers should be suffered to enter Rennes without opposition. The Baron accepted the terms, and returned with this answer to Bertrand, That Lancaster would rather suffer five hundred French archers to enter Rennes, than Du Guesclin singly to pass within its walls.

* Du Guesclin was frequently distinguished by the appellation of the Eagle, from having that bird as his arms emblazoned upon his shield.

The siege continued during an unusually severe winter. Bertrand, undismayed, hovered about the English camp, and frequently engaged with their troops, retreating alone in cases of absolute necessity, into the forests of Rennes and Chateaubriant. The neighbouring castle of Fougeray, a fortress of considerable importance, was in the possession of the English, and commanded by a gallant knight. Du Guesclin resolved to wrest it from them; and taking with him only a few determined followers, disguised as wood-cutters, each bearing a load of fuel on their backs, they proceeded to the castle, after having stationed a party of soldiers, concealed in the adjacent wood. The severity of the season made fuel a most desirable article; and those who had it for sale were freely admitted without the least suspicion of their purpose. The drawbridge of Fougeray was let down: Du Guesclin and his chosen men gained the portal; and throwing down their bundles of wood against the door, so that it could not be instantly closed, Bertrand hastily drew from beneath his cloak a dagger, and stabbed the porter to the heart. His companions did the same by the guard. The alarm was immediately given, and the ambuscade advanced from the wood, crying, in a loud voice, "*Notre Dame, Guesclin*," an exclamation terrible to the English. The conflict was short and fierce. Bertrand singly repelled seven men who attacked him, but received a severe wound. The castle was subdued, and all its inhabitants made captive. The army of Lancaster, harassed by Du Guesclin, and suffering from the severity of the season, murmured at the long-protracted siege. The citizens of Rennes, detesting the English yoke, and attached to the interests of Charles de Blois, determined to endure every rigour, rather than surrender their town. The Duke had recourse to stratagem, and caused a mine to be carried

under the earth, as far as the centre of the city, intending, during the night, so soon as the excavation should be completed, to surprise the unwary citizens, and take their town, before they could rally to defend it. This project was defeated, according to the superstition of the times, by a miraculous ringing of the great church bell; it is also recorded that a statue of the Virgin, stretched forth her hand, to indicate the place of danger: be this as it may, a mine could surely be discovered without the necessity of a miracle. The Duke of Lancaster, upon hearing that his plan was frustrated, gave himself up to a violent paroxysm of rage, and vowed most solemnly, that he would not quit the town, until he had planted the English banner upon its walls. The citizens remained firm in their defence; but human fortitude that can resist evil, must sometimes bend to fate, and that courage, which danger could not subdue, was at length broken by famine.

A general council assembled in the great hall, to deliberate upon measures for their immediate relief; capitulation seemed the only refuge left, this was resolved upon, when an old bourgeois proposed to the assembly a stratagem, which he offered to carry into execution: he would leave the town as a discontented person, and seek the Duke of Lancaster, to inform him the people of Rennes expected a succour of four thousand men, who were now actually advancing to their aid, and if this were cut off, they must necessarily surrender to the English. The stratagem succeeded, and the bourgeois contrived to escape, from his guard, while the Duke was gone in search of the four thousand men. Du Guesclin met the fugitive on his way to Nantes, and learning from him the success of his plan, determined to seize the opportunity, (offered by the absence of the Duke,) to enter Rennes. He surprised in their camp the remaining English

forces, fiercely encountered them, and burnt their tents: without loss of time he seized the supplies that had been brought to the English, and carried them into the town, as a present succour to the almost famished citizens. Bertrand then pursued with alacrity, the necessary defence, repaired the walls, and encouraged the people. The Duke returned, greatly provoked at having been made the easy dupe of a shallow artifice. Nothing was talked of but the exploits of Du Guesclin; the Baron de la Pole spoke so highly in his praise, that it inspired Lancaster, with the desire to see so famous a captain. Accordingly he dispatched a herald, who sounded a trumpet before the walls of Rennes, and demanded a parley with the governor: this obtained, he delivered the royal bidding of his master, and offered a safe conduct for Du Guesclin if he would accept the invitation, to visit John of Gaunt, and his nobles in their camp. Bertrand gave the herald a thousand florins in gold, and a velvet robe, saying, "he would willingly visit so generous a foe." Du Guesclin was conducted into the presence of the Duke, by Sir John Chandos, and the Baron de la Pole. The Prince saluted him with marks of esteem and respect, and after much conversation offered him great dignities, if he would join the English party. Bertrand, surprised by such a proposition, replied, with some tokens of anger, "No, Sire, I should be unworthy of them, could I accept them. To convince you, Prince, that I am not, I here reject your offer. I belong to Charles de Blois, and I will serve him faithfully." At that moment an English knight burst from the press that surrounded the Duke, and advancing towards Bertrand, exclaimed, "Du Guesclin, if you are a true knight, grant my prayer. You seized the castle of Fougeray, and murdered the commander: meet me in single combat?" "Yes," replied Bertrand, "if the Duke, whose guest I am, will grant permission." This was gained, and the

combat agreed upon. The next morning the adversaries entered the lists, for some time the contest appeared equal; but Du Guesclin at length triumphed, and unhorsed his rival on the field. His arms and horse, according to the laws of chivalry became the right of the victor: Bertrand refused to accept them, and resigned the spoil to the esquire of his foe; an act that greatly exalted the conduct of the victorious knight.

The siege of Rennes, proved long and fruitless, and the soldiers began to murmur at the hardships they endured. This discontent obliged the Duke to hold a council, in which it was advised that the siege should be instantly raised; but Lancaster felt that by such a measure his honour would be tarnished, as he had publicly vowed never to quit the town, till he had planted the English banner upon its walls.

The inhabitants of Rennes, whose supplies were nearly exhausted, found themselves in no condition much longer to hold out a defence. Du Guesclin knew the discontent that prevailed in the English army, as well as the distresses of his own; and proposed, therefore, to the Duke, that he should be permitted to plant the English standard upon the walls, if he would afterwards withdraw his powers. But, fearing Lancaster might discover the miserable state of the citizens, Du Guesclin, ever ready to prevent stratagem by *finesse*, caused the people to display all the provisions that remained in the town, and to set up empty barrels, that they might pass for a store of wine. This succeeded; Lancaster was deceived. The Duke then, in observance of his vow, planted with his own hand, a banner upon the walls; and having satisfied his conscience by an equivocal performance of the oath, immediately withdrew his force. Thus ended the memorable siege of Rennes, still recalled to the minds of the present inhabitants, by the streets being yet named after the chief captains who

were engaged in it, such as the Rue du Guesclin, De Clisson, De Beaumanoir, &c. &c.

Since we have been at Rennes, we have remarked how much even the better class of people differ from the French ; they have not the least trait of their complaisance, but address you in a rough and brutal way. We have observed also their excessive dislike of the English ; and I cannot here omit relating a trifling incident that will serve to illustrate the character of *gentlemen* Bretons, for I believe they are all very much alike. I was yesterday making a sketch of Port St. George, an ancient gateway in the outskirts of the town, when several persons, habited like gentlemen, came up, and very unceremoniously placed themselves about me. I imagine they considered it impossible a foreigner could understand French ; for they were very personal in their remarks, and amused themselves with conjecturing who I might be. At last they agreed I was either Italian or English ; but from my dress they determined the latter, and because all Englishwomen were little creatures. This remark introduced a conversation upon the general character of our nation, which they abused " in good set terms," without moving from their station. As I resolved to finish my drawing, I mustered up courage sufficient to continue it, without heeding their rudeness ; till one of them, wishing to gratify his curiosity by staring me in the face, placed himself between me and the object I was delineating. I motioned with my hand for him to move; but this he did not, or would not understand. I then, in few words, civilly begged him to get out of the way. Immediately one of them exclaimed, — " She speaks French, do all the women in England speak French ?" I took no notice of this, determined that I would not give up an English spirit, and be driven from my seat by im-

pertinence. These Breton gentlemen then entered into a fresh discourse upon French and English literature, and agreed that all we possessed was borrowed from the French, and that our best editions of Shakspeare, were a translation from Voltaire, who had given him beauties of his own, which the original never possessed. Whilst they were thus displaying their knowledge of such wonderful literary mysteries, a French officer came up, who knew these men, and seemed surprised at their intrusion. He begged them to remove, and politely apologised for their impertinence; assuring me that he was no Breton, and that if I knew the people as he did, I should find them the most brutal mannered, either in France, or any other country.

The excessive dislike the people of Britanny bear towards the English, is to be attributed, in a principal degree, to the idea they have formed, and yet entertain, respecting the conduct of England in the affair of Quiberon Bay, where our administration landed during the war a number of French emigrants to join the royalists. These unfortunate persons were all slaughtered in the action that ensued, and the French government, always desirous of disseminating amongst the people a hatred towards the English, caused a report to be circulated in Britanny, that we had sent the emigrants to Quiberon, for the purpose of being there murdered. I was walking yesterday with M. S—— in Rennes, when we stopped at the door of a shop, to examine a large map of Britanny. Mr. S—— looking for Auray, traced his finger along the map, till he paused at the mark of the celebrated druidical remain; and, turning to me, said, "There is Carnac." An officer who chanced to be passing at the moment, came up to him, and, with a fierce look, placed his own finger upon the map, exclaiming, "And there is *Quiberon!*"

LETTER XIX.

My dear ——, Ploermel.

We left Rennes in a cabriolet at five o'clock in the morning, and proceeded on our way, before the sun shone forth through grey and heavy clouds. At length the thick vapours that veiled the landscape gradually dispersed, and the cheerful greens of hills, trees, and valleys appeared in all their varied colours to gladden the eye with the prospect of re-animated nature. We continued our journey in this wildly picturesque country, passing through thick forests of chesnut trees, with which Britanny abounds. By the road's side, or in the fields, many wretchedly dirty-looking women were loitering, with the distaff in their hands, watching their cows and goats. The Bretons dwell in huts, generally built of mud; men, pigs, and children live all together, without distinction, in these cabins of accumulated filth and misery The people are, indeed, dirty to a loathed excess, and to this may be attributed their unhealthy, and even cadaverous aspect. Their manners are as wild and savage as their appearance, the only indication they exhibit of mingling at all with civilized creatures, is, that whenever they meet you, they bow their heads, or take off their hats in token of respect. I could not have supposed it possible that human nature endured an existence so buried in dirt, till I came into this province. The common people are apparently in the very lowest state of poverty. In some parts of Britanny the men wear a goat skin dress, and

look not unlike De Foe's description of Robinson Crusoe. The furry part of this dress is worn outside: it is made with long sleeves, and falls nearly below the knees. Their long shaggy hair hangs dishevelled about their shoulders, the head being covered by a broad flapped straw or beaver hat. Some few of the Bretons go without shoes or stockings; but the generality wear sabots, and thrust straw into them, to prevent the feet from being rubbed by the pressure of the wood. You frequently see the women, both old and young, sauntering along the fields with the distaff, employed in spinning off the flax. The girls carry milk upon their heads, in a vessel of rather an elegant form, somewhat resembling the common, Roman, household vessels.

We continued travelling, in the hope of coming into some town or village, where we might obtain refreshment; for, in consequence of leaving Rennes so early, we had not breakfasted, and, unfortunately, my little basket, from neglect, was unsupplied. You may imagine, therefore, that the postillion's annunciation of a town being in sight, was most agreeable intelligence to persons numbed with cold, and sick for want of food. Accordingly at noon we arrived at Pleilan, to us the land of promise, and, like many such lands, afforded only disappointment, augmented by the comfortable hopes we had indulged. The horses, who, from custom, knew their resting-place, jogged on at a full trot, that was soon abated by the mud, through which they had to wade in passing down the village street. Pleilan consists of a few miserable houses, inhabited by the pallid and dirty natives of Bretagne. Before their doors several children, covered only by a few tattered garments, were paddling for very sport, in the pool of slush that flooded the street; their savage manners and wretched looks, begrimed as they were with



dirt, gave them the appearance of little imps appertaining to some lower world.

We stopped at the entry of what was termed an inn, distinguished by the bush suspended over the door. At most of the inns in this country, they hang out such a signal, to denote that wine is sold within. This custom, now almost obsolete in England, reminds us of the old proverb, "Good wine needs no bush;" but if, in the inns, they sell only cyder, it is expressed in Britanny by hanging a few apples to the side of the bush. Here the horses were to rest two hours, during which time we proposed regaling ourselves with something like a dinner. Upon entering the inn, the first view of the interior made me start back; for I had never seen any thing at all similar to it before. Some faggots were blazing in a ruined chimney, by the side of which stood a miserable bed, where an old man sick of the gout was sitting up; the tortures of his disorder (for the fit was upon him) gave to a naturally fierce and savage countenance, a malignant and dreadful expression; his complaints burst forth in accents of impatient execration, unchecked by the presence of strangers. The curtains of his bed hung in tattered rags, festooned by spiders, that crawled about, and made their intricate web upon the pendant shreds of the decayed hangings. A slush pool, in the centre of the room, served the double purpose of a receiving hole for foul water, and a pond for the ducks, who enjoyed themselves by paddling about in it. A hen-roost stood above a larder of viands, beneath which a fowl was hatching her young upon a sort of dunghill. To think of dining was impossible; we begged to be shown into some other room, and enquired if they could give us bread and coffee. We were ushered into an apartment quite in character with the rest of

the house. After desiring that the nearly broken down chairs might be wiped, (a caution very necessary before venturing to sit down,) we ordered a fire, and had at least the comfort of warming ourselves, for all hope of refreshment vanished as soon as the repast appeared. The bread was full of sand, that gritted between the teeth, and so sour, that I could not taste a second piece; the coffee bore no resemblance to that beverage, excepting the brown-coloured tinge, but seemed a mixture of dirty water and sugar. We resigned it after the first taste, and paid for looking at such fare, as we could not be said to partake of it, the sum of four francs; while some French travellers below, were regaled in like manner for twelve sous each. One of these travellers had the charity to give me a bunch of grapes, which, with the addition of some raw chesnuts that Mr. S—— pulled from the trees as we journeyed on, was all the refreshment we could procure from five in the morning till ten o'clock the same night, when we got into Ploermel. I cannot help thinking how useful a moral lesson a day's starvation would be to those who have plenty, and a daily meal; that they may experience the misery arising from the want of food, and learn to pity and feel for the needy who have none.

While the horses were resting, we walked forward, till we came to a most charming spot, commanding a view of the country, woods and water, near the forges of Paimpol. Mr. S—— made a sketch of this beautiful scene, that bears a striking resemblance to some of the fine valleys of South Wales.

We are now at Ploermel, and still in the midst of dirt. The inn where we are lodged must have been built considerably more than a century ago, and I am certain, has never undergone

any sort of cleaning or sweeping since its erection. The apartment, where I am now writing to you, is little calculated to inspire cheerful thoughts; for whatever the philosophers may assert in regard to external things having little influence upon the mind, I cannot help thinking a wretched habitation, that presents nothing lively, neat, or agreeable to the eye, unconsciously affects the spirits, something like an English November day, when the worthy people of that country are said to have a greater propensity for hanging and drowning, than at any other time of the year. But, to return to my room, suppose me seated by a large old oak chimney, the wood burning upon iron dogs, and casting a red gleam around, that serves both to lighten the gloom and dispel the damps of the apartment. The walls, from the united effects of time, smoke, and filth, send forth a disagreeable musty smell. The table upon which I write, retains the dirt of many generations; the floor is eaten by worms, and inhabited by fleas, that sting the disturbers of their mouldy retreat.

The bed, (which is made by being beaten with an old broomstick, left constantly upon the bolster,) is the only tolerable accommodation, and even that is rendered obnoxious, by blankets of great antiquity, that have never known ablution, and are daily exposed to the tossing of a servant girl, whose face, hands, and apparel are literally disguised with dirt. This poor simple creature is very obliging, and, like a kindly plant that springs up midst noisome weeds, has much goodness in her nature. She has unluckily taken a fancy to me, which she has expressed more than once in her own manner, by giving me a hug, or a kiss so suddenly, that I could not get out of her way. In the midst of all this we fare very well, with the ex-

ception of the sandy sour bread, which is almost intolerable. Our plates, &c. I am obliged to wash before we use them, as cleansing with water is considered somewhat superfluous in Britanny. But to give you a complete idea of a domestic menage in this country, although, perhaps, beneath the dignity of a traveller, you must descend with me into the kitchen or common hall of the inn: if we get down the tottering staircase without falling, it is well; but certainly not without our gowns doing the office of a broom, and clearing away a little of the superabundant dirt. The kitchen has no flooring but the substantial earth. When it rains, the kennel from the street runs over through the door, and makes a soft mud carpeting. Great oaken beams form the ceiling, from which hang depending the spoils of the field, exhibiting all sorts of game, besides fowls, joints of meat, &c. A large chimney, that would hold a dozen people, is filled by black boiling pots, that hang above the burning faggots. Near the fire-side stands the landlady's bed, supported by a hen-coop full of little chickens. In the centre of the room, there is, as usual, a convenient slush pool, and close to it a long oak table, black from time and grease: there the viands are prepared; and whilst many an humble traveller is regaling at this household board, they draw the entrails from fowls, &c. which, to save trouble, are thrown upon a pile of like delectable combination, in one corner of the room. The solitary window retains but two unbroken panes of glass; to supply the rest, rags are hung up to keep out the weather. Assembled in this chaos of filth—this combination of villanous smells, are six or seven women, who all seem cooks, and from their dress and fire-burnt faces, look like so many infernal beings. The little maid is a sort of drudge to the head-cook, a woman nearly eighty years old, who exercises her autho-

rity in the querulous tones of peevish age; her decrepit form, and withered arms, (the protruding veins of which are visible in spite of a thick coating of dirt that encircles them, and seem starting through her dry and shriveled skin,) confer on her the appearance of presiding hag at the midnight orgies of the fiends.

Imagine my situation, when I tell you that I was here taken so ill, I could not leave my room. Mr. S—— felt greatly alarmed, when, on enquiry for assistance, he learned there was no medical aid within fifty miles of the place. I found difficulty in getting even clean warm water, the only thing I took. The poor girl showed me a great deal of kind attention, and more than once awakened me from a quiet sleep, by gently kissing my cheek; a mark of kindness I could have dispensed with in consideration of her own dirty face and attire. Mr. S—— at length discovered a chymist, who prepared, according to his directions, some medicines that afforded me relief.

I am persuaded my illness did not arise merely from fatigue, but more probably from the dangerous practice they have in this country, of making one sleep in linen so extremely damp, a thing to which English people are not accustomed; although, I am convinced, habit may reconcile such a practice without any fear of dangerous consequences; for it is surprising in what a state of humidity the people both of Normandy and Bretagne wear their linen, and receive no injury from it whatever. I do not feel quite comfortable in the prospect of our tour, as I find a certain complaint, called *la gale*, is very general here; but there is nothing surprising in this, if we consider the manner in which the Bretons live.

The description I have attempted giving you of their dirty habits, is by no means an *exaggerated picture*. I can claim no

merit in my relations to you, but that of their entire truth; if I am uncertain or doubtful of any point, I pass it over in silence, lest I should assert falsehood, and I know not what pleasure or credit can arise from becoming a detailer of lies. I should deem it not only unworthy in myself, but likewise an affront to the person I addressed, by using my own credit with them to attempt imposing upon their understanding, when they had not the power to satisfy themselves in ascertaining the truth.

LETTER XX.

Ploermel.

I AM, my dear ——, still writing to you from Ploermel, where we have been detained by my indisposition, much longer than we intended staying. Ploermel possesses considerable interest from the many historical events with which it is connected; though now but a poor village, it was formerly a large and capital town, where the Dukes of Britanny sometimes held their courts, and where many of them were interred in the ancient monastery of the Carmelites. The walls of the town still exist, although partly in a ruined state; some remains of ancient customs seem yet to live in practice here, for the Sacristan still retains the dress of ages long past, and appears at church in a robe *mi-partie* of red and blue, like the garb of the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries, when one leg of the pantaloon was, perhaps, green, and the other of a red or yellow colour.

Of the monastery of the Carmelites, the walls now alone exist, the Revolution having destroyed the rest of this once celebrated house. The remains of some of the tombs were taken from the ruined church, and placed within an orchard near the spot. The effigies in the orchard consist of a princess of Lyon, a female figure, and the constable of Anne of Bretagne, and his wife. The princess is carved in white marble, the workmanship beautiful; but that of the constable is executed in a rude manner.

We were informed that the remains of the tombs of two Dukes of Britanny had been removed from the Carmelites to the convent

of the Ursulines here ; but as no man was permitted to pass within the walls, it would be impossible Mr. S—— could see them. He desired me, therefore, to make the attempt, that I might give him some account of what they were. Accordingly I set out to obtain an interview with the abbess. The court-yard of the convent appeared in a miserable and ruinous state ; the chapel and building still exhibiting the marks of revolutionary destruction. The little grating at the door was concealed by a piece of tin, pierced with small holes, through which a sister demanded what I wanted. Upon expressing a desire to speak with the superior, the tin disappeared, and through the grating, I perceived a dismal figure all in black, her face concealed by her veil, who directed me in what manner to proceed. Accordingly I found my way into a small room ; there a pretty girl, attired in the dress of a novice, was teaching several dirty children to read. I was immediately conducted into another apartment, where an elderly female stood within the large iron grating to receive me. Her mild and agreeable countenance, united to a most pleasing address, relieved me from all embarrassment, I apologised for my intrusion, and explained the motives that induced it. She listened to me with politeness, and assured me, although it was against the rules of the house, that both myself and Mr. S—— should be welcome to see the remains of the tombs that were now preserved within the cloisters of the convent. She extended her hand to me through the grating, and said, that the English had given such a kind reception to the French during their distressing emigration, that she felt happy in the opportunity of obliging any individual of that nation.

I returned for Mr. S——; and the mother received us both in her parlour, where, as there was more light, with no iron bars

between us, I had a full view of her person and dismal attire. The nun who acted as portress at the gate, joined the Lady Abbess, and paid us her compliments in very civil terms. The superior then conducted us to the cloisters, where the tombs of John the First of that name, and John the Second, Dukes of Britanny, and Earls of Richmond, were preserved: the former Duke had espoused Beatrice, a daughter of our Henry the Third; and the latter is interesting from being the effigy of that Prince who, leaving at his death the succession of the dukedom undetermined, occasioned those calamitous wars which so long afflicted this province. These effigies are of very fine sculpture, and in a perfect state. Mr. S—— requested permission to make drawings from them; this was immediately granted; and the agreeable Abbess invited me to pass my time at the convent while he was employed. I readily accepted her polite offer, and returned to the parlour. The Abbess, after some conversation, expressed a wish to conduct me over the house, and to introduce me both to her nuns, and pretty novices, as she termed them. I could not help contrasting the manners of this amiable woman with those of the mother at Rennes; her conversation, entirely free from presumption or severity, evinced the pure and calm sentiments of a sincerely pious mind; her attention to the sisters appeared kind and parental, while their extreme respect and solicitude to obey her, proved how great an influence she had acquired by her benevolent and amiable manners; for there are no services so devoted, no rules so implicitly obeyed, as those to which the heart subscribes a willing and entire assent. I found the novices employed, some in teaching the boarders of the convent, assisted by a few of the nuns, and others embroidering muslins or silks. The novices wear the black dress, with a thick, white, cloth veil that hangs over the head as low as the eye-brows; their hair is entirely

concealed; and the white chin-cloth, that is suspended round the ears, falls over the bosom. This costume is by no means becoming; a woman must be very pretty indeed to look tolerably well in it. The novices still retain their hair, although it is not seen; but, on making profession, or taking the black veil, it is entirely cut off.

The sight of these young girls excited my compassion. At an age when the mind acts more from impulse than reflection, while they yet scarcely know in what situation their future happiness might be established or subverted, they were preparing an endless and cheerless imprisonment for the remainder of their days. One young woman particularly attracted my observation: she was so handsome and fair, that her complexion seemed almost as delicate as the veil she wore; her manner appeared simply engaging, and she was altogether so superior to her companions, that I could not resist begging the Abbess to inform me the occasion of her being there. The superior told me she was the child of most respectable parents, who carefully superintended her education, with the assistance of the family director or priest; that the young lady for some time devoted her attention to the acquirements of literature and science, but being suddenly struck with a powerful conviction of the brevity of human life, and the importance of eternity, she determined, notwithstanding every opposition, to renounce the world. Her parents, greatly distressed by her resolution, for a considerable time, endeavoured to combat it; but finding their efforts vain, at the age of seventeen, they had resigned their child to seclusion.

We quitted the novices, and visited the cells; every nun had a little apartment to herself; a bed, a table bearing a crucifix, and a chair, constituted the furniture of each. I was soon intro-

duced to all the sisters, whose curiosity to see a being belonging to the world, and of a foreign country, brought them eagerly around me. I endeavoured to please them, by satisfying their enquiries relative to my own country, and what was doing in the world; they were extremely anxious to know if Bonaparte lived secured, and feared his returning to France: they made me describe St. Helena, and the manner in which the ex-Emperor lived. They expressed themselves pleased with the accounts I gave, and were anxious to show me civilities. An elderly nun requested I would allow the boarders of the convent to pay their respects to the English lady, as they had never seen any one of that nation in Ploermel. Accordingly, several country girls came into the room, and all pressed round me; some seated themselves upon the floor, the better to gaze at so strange a being, and seemed as much struck with wonder as if I had fallen from the moon; while their extreme simplicity and ignorance equally amused me.

I was next conducted into the dining-hall. The Abbess's table stood alone at the upper end of the room; the nuns were seated at long tables on either side; and during their scanty and frugal repast, a nun appointed for the duty by the Lady Abbess, preached an extempore sermon on the joys of the heavenly world.

After dinner, I attended the superior into her own cell, where she informed me the brief story of her life. At the age of eighteen she became disgusted with the world, from a very severe disappointment that too frequently wounds a susceptible mind; and resolving to seek, in the hopes of futurity, that happiness she could no longer find in society, she devoted herself to a monastic life. When the Revolution broke out, she was persecuted with

the rest of her order; and having escaped the destruction that threatened her, she took refuge with her own family in a remote part of France. Tranquillity once more restored, her friends endeavoured to persuade her to remain with them; but time, that great physician to afflictions, had taught her to consider her sorrows as instrumental to her ultimate good: she returned to her seclusion, and those few nuns who had escaped the common danger followed her example. They found their convent desolated, and exerted their utmost means in repairing it; but poverty prevented their doing much towards rendering their habitation either handsome or comfortable. The Abbess well described their distressed condition, but remarked such sufferings were nothing for the espoused of Christ.

We then walked towards the chapel. It was not the hour of general prayer, but several nuns were kneeling upon the ground, absorbed in deep meditation, before an image of our Saviour upon the cross, that hung suspended from the roof. The Abbess devoutly crossed herself with holy water; and having prayed for a few minutes before the figure of the Virgin, quitted the chapel. Whilst we were proceeding to the parlour, I offered the mother some fine flowers that I had in my bosom; but she declined them, saying, with a serious air, "We never take such things:" and I found they were considered by devotees one of the vanities of this world, although the beautiful productions of that Almighty Being to whom they dedicate their lives. We returned to the parlour, where the Abbess apologised for leaving me, but expressed her hopes that I should find an agreeable companion in Maria Theresa, whose turn it was to act as portress, an office that prevented her attendance in the chapel.

Maria Theresa I found a very intelligent, good-natured young

woman. We had no sort of reserve, and soon entered into familiar conversation. As a gossip with a nun is by no means common in England, you may feel some curiosity to hear a little of our discourse; and as the religious opinions of Maria are, I believe, like those received in all convents, I shall not pass in total silence her conversation. I begged Maria to permit me to sketch her costume. She consented, if the mother would allow it. The good-natured nun gained the necessary leave, on condition I would draw only the dress, without copying her face. To this I consented, and, after adjusting her drapery, commenced my work.

"And how long have you been a nun?" said I. — "Seven years, Madam."

"Do you not sometimes think of the friends and the world you have sacrificed?" — "Oh yes; but the remembrance of that world in which I once mixed, seems to me like a dream, when the night that brought it is past,—certain, but confused,—a very dream."

"Was this seclusion your own choice?" — "Entirely; for I had good and kind friends. I had aged parents, too. We all wept bitterly at parting."

"Do they not sometimes visit you in your retirement?" — "No, they lived too far off; and my mother is dead now. I have often fancied, in my melancholy hours, that I saw her extending her dying hand to grasp mine, but mine was not there to meet it."

"You regret, then, leaving the world, where you might have been a happiness to your family, and equally have secured your own salvation?" — "Yes; but I am safer here: the world offers too many, and sometimes irresistible temptations, that we are freed

from in the seclusion of a convent. I could tell a sad tale of the world. There it is, indeed, difficult to gain Heaven. Life passes here tranquilly; without joy, but devoid of sorrow, and bitter disappointments (the nun sighed deeply), that pursue those who dare seek happiness in a transitory state of things. We must die; and when once the grave has closed upon all our future illusions, or present enjoyments, what matters it, if our fortune here has presented the cup of happiness, or the bitter draught of sorrow? All is alike ended. Eternity and life then but begin."

A bell sounded while the nun was speaking the philosophical sentiments of a dejected mind. Maria started from her seat, and kneeling with her back towards me, remained some minutes in prayer. She then arose, and resumed her place.

"I have been praying to the Virgin," said she. "We do so regularly three times a day, besides the services in the chapel. Do you pray to the Virgin, Madam?" "No, Maria; we consider the Virgin, in our church, merely as a mortal, who was ordained to give birth to our Saviour. We pray only to God and our Redeemer."

"But do you not think the Virgin an intercessor with God for us?" — "No; we believe only in the intercession of Christ, by whose sacrifice we are saved."

"And have you no confession to the priest either?" — "None. We confess our sins to Him alone who knows the heart he has formed, and not to a human being frail as ourselves." — "That appears strange to me," said Maria; "for, surely, (supposing it were not an act of faith,) nothing seems more natural, than when the heart is burthened with conscious guilt, to feel anxious to

disclose its secrets to one who has not only the power of directing it better, but also of forgiving our sins by absolution."

While Maria was speaking, I heard the door open, and these words distinctly pronounced, "*Nous n'avons que notre ame à sauver nous sommes ici pour gagner les cieux.*" I looked round, and perceived an aged nun standing behind my chair, who had uttered this sentence upon entering the room. I was struck with her appearance. Her countenance was of a deadly pallid hue; her frame weakened by sickness, the effect, perhaps, of severe abstinence. Her head shook with a tremulous motion. She stood with her arms crossed upon her bosom, her eyes closed, and her head declining. She seemed occupied in mental prayer. After a moment's pause, she quitted her position, and seated herself by my side.

"I hope, sister," said the aged nun, "that you have been talking to this lady, and endeavouring to make her think as we do."—"We were just speaking on the subject, mother, when you came in. Madam," continued Maria, addressing herself to me, "we always call the aged nuns Mother." *

"Ah, Maria," said the old lady, "the pains of age are good for the soul. We feel then what this life really is,—a burthen that keeps us from immortality. We live too long, when we are past the power of doing good. How happy would it make me, sinking, as I am, into the grave, could I save one soul from destruction. Could I save you——." Here the nun gently took my hand, and looked at me with an air of real compassion.

* It is also common in religious houses for the nuns to adopt and bear the name of some particular saint, whose peculiar virtues they endeavour to imitate, as St. Mary, St. Agnes, St. Winifrid, &c.

"I am afraid," continued Maria, "this lady has no belief in absolution." — "Indeed, I have not," said I. "For it seems to me impossible that any human being can absolve me of the offences I have committed towards God or my fellow-beings. From the Deity have we received those laws that teach us the duties of moral justice and sincere faith: if I have broken them, and repent, my penitence must be sincere, or it will not avail me in the eye of God. And what human being can possess the power of the Deity to judge my sincerity? and who shall dare arrogate his mercy in pardoning those offences committed towards Himself?"

"You are sadly in error," said the aged nun. "We know the priest is but mortal like ourselves. Nor can his absolution benefit us, unless our repentance is sincere."

"If it is sincere, then," I rejoined, "we do not need absolution. God will, in his mercy, pardon us, without the ejaculation of the priest."

"But how, then, should we know it?" exclaimed Maria. — "By the confidence we place in the promises of the Gospel."

"That is not sufficient," said the aged nun. "The priest, for the time being, possesses the absolute power of God. And," added she, emphatically, raising her hands and eyes, "he absolves us in the name of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. It is the voice of Heaven that speaks by him, — of that God he represents."

"Indeed, Madam," I replied, "what you have cited, seems to me no authority at all, to sanction either the necessity of auricular confession, or the power and sufficiency of human absolution. Christ deputed the apostles to propagate the Gospel after his crucifixion, and has explicitly declared, that such per-

sons as received the word of God, and repented their sins, should be pardoned; but no where, in the New Testament, is confession enjoined as an absolute duty to be continued, or as a necessary act in the Christian church, unless it be that public confession of the sinfulness of all men, and of ourselves, which we make, in common, in our devotional assemblies.

"You have no belief, then, I suppose," said the nun, (waving the argument about confession,) "that the host is the actual body and blood of Christ."—"None."

"What do you think it then in your church."—"A solemn sacrament, that we receive in remembrance of the great sacrifice of our Redeemer."

"It is much more than that," said the nun; "it is by a miracle the absolute body and blood of our Redeemer; for Christ declared the bread and wine to be his own flesh and blood."—"And added," I remarked, "This do in remembrance of me."

"That cannot alter the first expressions," replied the nun.—"But did not our Saviour continually speak in figurative language to his disciples, and was not the bread and wine, distributed to them before his death, an actual figure of that death."

"It is very improbable," said Maria, "that the last act of our Saviour should be figurative."—"Still," I replied, "the remembrance of an act is not the act itself; the remembrance, therefore, of Christ's body and blood does not constitute the renewal of either."

"You do not believe, then, I suppose," rejoined the nun. "that at the moment of consecration, Christ descends, although invisibly to us, upon the altar; a thing as certain as that no one out of our church Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman can be saved."—"Indeed," I replied, "you would find it difficult to make me

believe so uncharitable a doctrine, more especially as charity is the basis of Christianity."

"I should not be inclined to think so, either," said Maria; "but you know it is the doctrine of the Pope, who is infallible, not as a man, but in his office."

The bell again sounded for orisons, and the Abbess entered to accompany the aged nun into the chapel; our conversation was interrupted, but they left me, expressing their hopes, that God would yet unfold to me the truth, and reclaim me from my errors. Maria explained to me the custom of orisons, or the assembling of the nuns to think or pray whatever the Divine Power suggests: she also informed me that the sisters rise at four in the morning to say matins, and perform divine service several times during the day. Maria endeavoured to entertain by shewing me some large folios, containing the lives and miracles of several score of modern saints, the only books besides those of prayer which the sisters were allowed to read. She related to me the history of a nun living in a convent near Vannes, who is called a saint elect, but whose adventures appeared very melancholy to me. She was the daughter of a noble family, who consented to give her in marriage to a young gentleman greatly attached to her. A short time before the appointed nuptials her father died, and her mother survived his decease but a few days. The young lady considering this a warning from Heaven, that her marriage was adverse to the will of God, became melancholy, and believing herself chosen a spouse of Christ, determined upon taking the veil. Her lover, disappointed in all his hopes, declared, that if the lady became a nun, he would not survive her loss. She persisted in her design, notwithstanding her own affection and his melancholy state of mind, and the unfortunate man, in a fit of

despondency, put a period to his existence. The nun, far from feeling any regret on the subject, gloried in having resigned all her hopes, by devoting herself to God, and at present bears the reputation of a saint, from wearing the hair shirt, to fret her skin, and practising every kind of austerity.

The Abbess very freely permitted Mr. S—— to converse with any of the *old* or *superannuated* nuns, but the good lady was too cautious to extend this kind privilege to the younger sisters, or to the novices, fearing, I imagine, the very sight of a young man might make them dream of the world again; a caution they would willingly have dispensed with, as they did not fail gratifying their curiosity by taking a peep at him from behind the columns of the cloisters during the time he was employed.

We visited the convent again yesterday, and I requested the Abbess to permit me to accompany her to the chapel; she seemed both pleased and surprised at my request. "What!" said she, "will you join in the worship of a church different from your own."—"Certainly," I replied. "We have both the same intent, and differ but in the mode of our worship, having the adoration of an Almighty Providence as the common object of both in view." The Abbess conducted me into the chapel, where we found the nuns already assembled. She placed me near her in the choir, and whispered in my ear, as she knelt down, "May God touch your heart, and make you like one of us." The large black curtain that covered the grating, and concealed the nuns from the view of the congregation in the church, was then drawn back. The altar, where the priest officiated, stood without the grating. The nuns seated themselves in richly carved oaken stalls, on either side the choir; and the novices, covered with their long white veils, sat on low benches

in front of the sisters. Two of these young girls, accompanied by an elderly nun, slowly advanced into the centre of the aisle, and after humbly prostrating themselves before the suspended crucifix, they turned towards the altar, and commenced the service, chaunting, in notes of pathetic melody, a hymn to the Virgin. During the office, they frequently bent their bodies towards the earth, and sometimes remained several minutes in that position. The sound of a bell proclaimed the elevation of the host, when the whole sisterhood fell upon their knees, with every token of the deepest reverence and humiliation. Several even threw themselves at full length upon the ground, as if overpowered by the splendour of some mental vision of divinity. Whenever any of the sisterhood crossed the choir, they invariably fell upon their knees, before the image of the crucifixion, at the same time making the sign of the cross. I have seen mass performed with more pageantry, but never, I think, with so much solemnity, as at this convent of Ursuline nuns. The whole ceremony was characterised by a grandeur and awful dignity, very imposing, and calculated to inspire a serious feeling in the most unthinking mind. While the youth and beauty of several of the novices awakened a sense of compassion for their melancholy life, whose innocence and purity thus prostrated before the throne of mercy, gave an additional interest to the solemnity of their devotion.

I took my leave of the Abbess, after being present at the benediction. In the afternoon, she kindly sent the confessor to the inn, that he might inform us how happy she should feel to render us any service before we quitted the place; and from him we learnt, that she was about writing to inform the Bishop of Vannes, of the peculiar circumstances that had induced her to

admit Mr. S—— within the walls of the convent. The confessor, Monsieur ——, had been several years in England. We had a good deal of chat about convents, &c. and he informed me, that, before the Revolution, it was common with families of distinction in France, to give a large portion to the eldest daughter, and send the rest into a nunnery; but at the present time few women of family take the veil, the generality of nuns being such persons whose slender means prevented their living in the world without following some profession. He assured me, all nuns, now-a-days, were voluntarily devotees. But, notwithstanding his assertion, I have heard (and believe its truth) that young women are often persuaded to sacrifice themselves by their confessors, whose influence, under the character of spiritual director, is unlimited over the young and weak-minded girl.

I fear you are tired by so long a letter; but as the customs, and more particularly the opinions, of the recluse are little known in England, I thought you would feel interested in some account of those who so repeatedly exclaim, "*Nous n'avons que notre ame à sauver, nous sommes ici pour gagner les cieux.*"

LETTER XXI.

MY DEAR ——, Josselin.

I am now writing to you from a place with which we are delighted, although inhabited by Bretons, and so remote, that we had some difficulty in procuring any conveyance hither. The post-house at Ploermel had horses, but no cabriolet. After some trouble, we engaged the only vehicle that the town could afford, a little cart without springs. Fortunately the journey was short, or we should have left our baggage to the postillion's care, and walked the greater part of the way, as less fatiguing than being so intolerably jolted about. We passed through a most beautiful country, variegated with hills, valleys, woods, and water, till we halted upon a desert heath, to view the spot so celebrated from having been the scene where the memorable battle of Trent was fought, in the time of our Edward the Third. A stone cross was formerly erected in commemoration of the event; the broken fragments now alone remain, as they were left by the Revolutionists, who threw it down. This heath is situated exactly half-way between Josselin and Ploermel, either town being in view. The former lies in a valley, surrounded by picturesque scenery; and the latter appears rising in the midst of woods, upon the summit of a gentle eminence. Upon the base of the broken cross appears the following inscription: —

A la memoire perpetuelle de la Bataille des Trante, que Mgr le Mareschal de Beaumanoir, a gaignee dans ce lieu l'an. 1350.

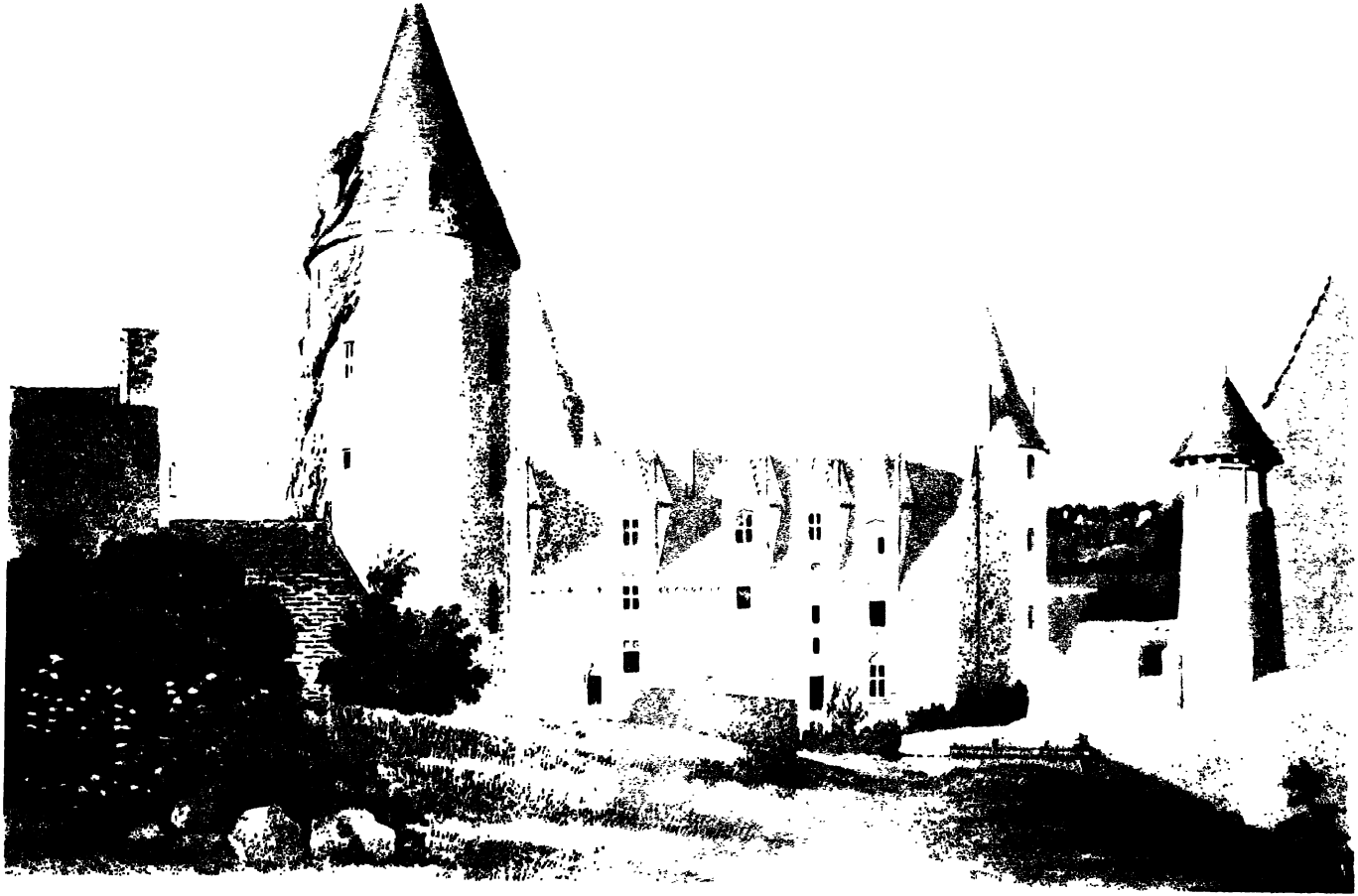
I cannot here pass an action so celebrated without some brief mention of the principal events which distinguished it.

Sir Thomas Dagworth, an English knight, was killed by the people during his stay in Britanny; an act that greatly exasperated the English, who took every opportunity of revenging it, by devastating their country and burning their towns. Beaumanoir, desirous of preventing a continuance of such outrages, sent to Bembro, an English knight in the Breton service, then stationed at Ploermel, and entreated a conference with him. In this debate it was agreed, that thirty Englishmen and thirty Bretons should meet at the half-way oak tree, between Josselin and Ploermel, to decide by combat the grievances of which they complained. The battle was fought in the month of March, A. D. 1350. Bembro's troops consisted of English, Germans, and Bretons; amongst them were Sir Robert Knolles, Sir Hugh Calvely, and a remarkably strong man, named Hulbitée. Beaumanoir had several knights of his party, Geoffry du Bois, and the Lord de Tinteniac; the remainder of his troops were all squires of renown. Before the commencement of the combat, Bembro represented to his adversary, that they had engaged without the permission of their several princes. To this Beaumanoir replied, that such a consideration was now too late, and they would try that day in battle, which had the fairest mistresses. The arms of the combatants were various, for every man had the privilege of using whatever weapon he thought best. One warrior (probably the powerful Hulbitée) bore an iron mall weighing twenty-five pounds. The two chiefs, Bembro and Beaumanoir, encouraged their men, both by exhortation and example, and having ranged their several parties in order of battle, the furious onset began, each resolving by a gallant bearing to maintain that day

the honour of their cause. The English fought with confidence, inspired by the remembrance of a prophecy of Merlin's, which had predicted their success. The contest was fierce and sanguine; Bembro fell dead upon the field. Beaumanoir, exhausted with fatigue, and faint from loss of blood, in consequence of the wound he had received, was retiring from the field to drink, when Geoffry du Bois, exclaimed, "Drink thine own blood, Beaumanoir, and thy thirst will cease." The Breton chief, angered by the taunt, returned to the field with unslaked thirst, and there evinced such an undaunted spirit, that terror and dismay followed his steps. The English stood firm, but their ranks became broken, and the Bretons finally triumphed. The combat, however, did not end the grievances of the Bretons, or decide the disputed title of the duchy. It is not improbable that the death of Bembro, before the termination of the fight, dispirited the English, who lost the confidence they had placed in the prophecy of Merlin.

We quitted the desert heath, and descending the gentle declivity of a hill, Josselin appeared in the distance. The picturesque towers of its ancient castle, once the strong retreat of De Clisson, (the friend and companion of Du Guesclin) the Gothic pinnacles, and ruined walls, the rustic village, the river winding through the valley, at the foot of green hills, covered by woods that waved upon their sloping sides, combined to form a picture of peculiar and striking character. As we drew nearer to the town, these objects became more imposing, and presented features of a grand and romantic beauty. The grey walls of the castle, noble in their structure, and venerable from time, stand on the summit of a lofty rock, that overhangs the river Aout; the towers appearing lengthened and reflected in the transparent bosom of the waters.





Beyond, the stream falls over some rocks, beneath a Gothic bridge, forming a beautiful cascade. Several houses, coeval with the date of the castle, are seen near the spot. Rocks and woods overhang the opposite side of the river, that undulates through the tranquil and fertile valley, passing, in its course, the ruined walls of the venerable abbey of St. Johns. The castle, towards the town, is enclosed by a deep moat, and massive walls; it was once flanked by seven strong towers, four of which now alone remain. The façade of the building, looking towards the interior court, was erected by Anne of Bretagne, who added some parts of the superstructure. This façade is of beautiful workmanship, and possesses that combination of elegant and diversified ornament, so peculiar to Gothic architecture. Above several of the windows appears the letter A, (the initial of the Duchess Anne,) surmounted by a crown: light communicating galleries run from one window to another, adorned with the richest fretted ornaments. Time has achieved on these lofty and stupendous towers, what scarcely human force could effect; they lie ivy-grown and mouldering into ruins, while the solid rocks on which they stand (shaped by art to unite in form with the towers that rise upon them) still remain firm and unbroken, in their original grandeur. It is much to be regretted, that the parts of this beautiful edifice erected by Anne of Bretagne, are falling fast to decay; the roof appears as if it would not be remaining another year, for the beams are daily tumbling down; but, fourteen years since, the whole building was entire. The Prussian troops who were some time back prisoners in Josselin Castle, upon being freed from their incarceration, dilapidated the building, and set fire to the interior, which has never been repaired, and most probably in a few years will be levelled to the ground. Josselin is by no means a dirty town, and very

superior to Ploermel. The church was much injured during the Revolution, being then converted into a stable, but it is now restored to its original purpose. There is another half-ruined church without the town, where lately was discovered the tomb and body of a Knight-templar ———. We are now in the very heart of Britanny. The poor inhabitants in the towns talk a kind of French that I am sometimes puzzled to understand; but the country people speak nothing but the Patois or Breton tongue. They wear a singular costume, and, in their manners and appearance, much resemble the idea I have formed of human beings quite in an uncultivated state of society.

We met a wedding to-day returning from church, the bride and bridegroom were peasants in the vicinity of Josselin. The nuptial train was preceded by a long-haired minstrel, playing upon the bag-pipes: he advanced in a half-dancing step to the accompaniment of his own music, attired in the shaggy spoils of the goat; his grotesque air and rude gesture, his furry habit and minstrel trade, gave to his appearance the character of a wild satyr in some sylvan scene. The cavalcade followed, dressed in the fashion of their country, rendered still more gay by the many knots of various-coloured ribband, that were placed about their garments.

They have in this province a most strange custom of celebrating the publication of a contract of marriage, which is affixed to the church door about three weeks before the performance of the ceremony. Last night we were sitting in our inn, enjoying the comfortable warmth of a wood fire, when our ears were suddenly assailed by a strange combination of distant sounds: the noise continued so long, that curiosity at length induced Mr. S—— to ascertain whence it arose; he followed the sound, and perceived in the outskirts of the town thirty or forty men and women



assembled together, who, hand in hand, were jumping and dancing like savages, in a ring, to no other music than the accompaniment of a monotonous sing-song repetition of two words, that they all shouted in unison, without the least intermission. They continued this nocturnal rite for nearly three hours, in celebration of a contract that had been made public in the morning.

If you will grant me the patience to follow me into a Breton cabin, I will present you to a group of these wild beings; such a scene will afford you a better idea of their manners and mode of living than any comments of my own. I yesterday went into the market, at the most busy time, in order to observe the people; when I remarked a girl attired so completely in the costume of the country, that I thought it would be desirable could I engage her to sit for her picture. She placed some sacks of corn upon her horse, and was about mounting to quit the market, when I spoke to her in French; she answered by shaking her head, and uttered a few words in Patois, of which I could only make out the word *gaelic*. A woman standing at the door of a wretched hatter's shop came forward and offered her services as my interpreter. The affair was soon settled, and the girl consented to sit for her picture. She was from Bignan, a neighbouring town, and as her costume is that of the country in general, I shall here describe it. She was dressed in a petticoat or skirt of white flannel, bordered with a scarlet band above the hem; this skirt is sewed to the body in large full plaits; the body or jacket was made of scarlet cloth, tight to the shape, and reached nearly up to the throat; the sleeves were of the same colour, sitting close to the arm, and turned up at the wrist with a deep cuff; both the body and sleeves being trimmed with a braiding composed of black velvet ribband, embroidered with coloured worsteds; her

apron was of a deep mulberry colour, fastened with an ornamented sash, tied in a bow at the side; her cap of white linen set tight to the head, covered with another cap, that served the purpose of a bonnet; this was made of a coarse starched cloth, like brown Holland, the form conical, with two long flaps, hanging down her back, or sometimes pinned up at the pleasure of the wearer; her necklace was of amber, and black beads; she wore also, suspended by a velvet string, a little ebony crucifix, with the image of our Saviour upon it, wrought in pure gold; from the appearance of this ornament, I should imagine it must have descended to her as a family relic, as it is certainly of ancient workmanship; her brooch, that fastened her shift in front, was formed of white bugles and green glass beads, put together in a very pretty manner. In her person, this damsel appeared of a thick-set shape, broad backed, and high shouldered; her face round and fat, with a complexion naturally red, and much tanned by the effects of sun, and field-occupation; the expression of her countenance might justly be termed that of a stupid mere animal existence, although not more than eighteen years old, (for the Breton women are too unsophisticated to deny their age;) she looked much past thirty. Such was the charming creature I selected for the pencil of Mr. S——, and such are generally the female natives of Bretagne, to whom this picture may in common apply.

The girl was in too great haste to go so far as our inn; the woman offered the use of her cabin, and the portrait was immediately commenced; but we were no sooner seated, than a number of Bretons pressed in to see so extraordinary a sight. They all spoke Patois, and were even vociferous in their loud exclamations of surprise, their wild and strange looks, their

gestures, and voice were like those of half-frantic beings. Many of them appeared so dirty, that I could scarcely see the colour of their skin. They seemed to have no idea of the distinctions of condition; for some of the girls, in order to examine my dress, turned me round, and with their dirty hands, most unceremoniously handled my gown or pelisse. Several Bretons seated themselves upon the ground, to watch the motion of Mr. S——'s hand, others pressed around him, and even attempted to touch the pencil he was using, to ascertain, I imagine, what such a magical little implement could be.

A party of these Bretons placed themselves at a table, in order to regale, and brought in a large jug of cider, that was handed about, and soon emptied and replenished. The girl, whose sitting to Mr. S—— had attracted such a multitude, was plentifully supplied with cider by her companions; and a woman, who seemed to be a person of authority amongst them, ordered another jug of their favourite drink, at the same time pointing towards me. As soon as it appeared, she suddenly jumped up, and throwing herself across the table, seized me so roughly by the arm, that I staggered back a few paces; she violently shouted to me in Patois, as if she thought I could understand her the better by the exaltation of her voice, and thrusting the jug of cider in my face, wanted me to partake of the contents; I turned aside my head, and by signs, made her comprehend I declined her offer; but the fierce look she gave me, and the loud and angry exclamation that accompanied it, convinced me she resented my refusal.

But I must now quit this subject, and tell you, that, in the church of Josselin, we found the remains of the tomb dedicated to the memory of the celebrated Sir Oliver de Clisson. In one

place lay the trunks of the knight and his lady, and in another several fragments of these figures, with the black marble table that belonged to the tomb, upon which the effigies had been originally placed. About it, engraven in deep characters, appeared the following inscription,

Chi gist noble et puissant Seigneur Monseigneur Olivier de Clison, Jadis Connestable de France, Seigneur de Clison de Porhoet, de Belleville, et de Lagarnache, qui trespassa en Apuril le jour Saint Jorge lan MCCCC et VII. Prieg Dieur pour son ame. Amen.

The head of Sir Oliver was not to be found in the church with the other fragments; after much enquiry, we accidentally learned that it ornamented the garden of a tobacconist. The only existing memorial of so great a man converted into the decoration of a tobacconist's garden! "To what base uses may we not return." The head possesses very fine and marked character. Mr. S—— felt desirous of bringing it back to the body, and of uniting the disjointed parts, that he might make a drawing from the whole, and possibly suggest the plan of their being again permanently united. For this purpose he judged it necessary to apply to Monsieur Le Curé of Josselin.

We therefore called upon that gentleman in the evening; fortunately he was at home. The Curé is a fine stately old man, remarkably precise and measured in his expressions. We found him seated by the dying embers of a wood fire; a solitary candle burnt upon the mantle-piece of a large old chimney; the oak pannels of the apartment were decorated with the portraits of several saints; his rosary and books lay by his side. He was seated in an easy chair, dressed in a long black silk gown, bound

round the waist with a broad belt; his venerable silvered-hairs covered by a little close black cap: he seemed musing in serious meditation. His housekeeper, whose office was conspicuous by the bunch of keys suspended from her girdle, ushered us into the presence of her master with a stately manner, much resembling his own. The old man raised his head at our approach, and received us with the most formal politeness; although every word seemed weighed and delivered according to the relative importance of each, yet there was nothing forbidding or disagreeable in his manner. Mr. S—— opened the conversation by making known his wish; but he had no sooner informed him we were English travellers, than the Curé rose from his seat, and welcomed us with cordial hospitality. The Curé then informed us that he had passed ten years in England during the emigration of the French, and had returned to his own parish of Josselin at the time of the short peace. "You are English people," said the old gentleman; "the English shall ever be welcome to rest in my home: I came into their country when I was driven from my own; I had neither friends, money, or their language, for the first three years; I eat my daily meal at their cost. I then taught them my tongue, and they regarded me as a brother; for ten years I was supported by their notice, and protected by their laws; gratitude opens my door at the approach of any of their nation." The venerable man came forward, seated us closer to the fire, and ordered more faggots to replenish it. He pressed us to leave the inn, and begged we would take up our residence at his house. This we declined, but promised to breakfast and dine with him the next day, in compliance with his invitation, given in *English*, that we would take with him *the luck of the pot.* Accordingly the next morning we presented ourselves at the door of Monsieur le Curé, who re-

ceived us in his state-apartment: it was hung with old tapestry, and decorated with a few family portraits, languishing in the full-bottomed wigs of Louis XIVth's time; the oaken floor was so nicely waxed, that I nearly slipped down while Monsieur handed me to the great-chair at the upper end of the room, which I found he considered the most ceremonious seat.

After breakfast the Curé offered to conduct us through the church and some other buildings. We first visited the Penitentiary House he had erected at his own cost. It is calculated to hold five hundred persons. This Penitentiary is designed for those who are desirous of retiring for a short time to meditate upon their sins. The Sisters of Charity take care of the house, and attend upon the penitents. We then proceeded to the church; and while Mr. S- - - was arranging the mutilated figures, I was engaged in conversation with the Curé, who asked me innumerable questions; and, amongst the rest, if I had any relations in the army and navy? When I told him I had, he seemed pleased, and promised himself some amusement in looking for their names (where he would be certain not to find them), viz. in an old Court Calendar he had brought from England sixteen years since. Monsieur —— is a complete character: hospitable, polite, and kind; but his attentions are rendered even painful by a most extraordinary observance of form and etiquette.

He related to us an anecdote that evinced both his good-nature and the extreme simplicity of his character: During the late war, a person belonging to an English ship, induced by motives of curiosity, landed on the coast of Britanny, without apprehending danger; of course he was immediately seized on suspicion of being a spy, and marched up the country. The escort arrived at Josselin with the prisoner in a most distressed

condition, his shoes being actually worn from off his feet; they brought him before Monsieur le Curé, who commenced his interrogations with — "You are an Englishman. What is your name?"

"My name," replied the prisoner, "is B——."

"B ——," said Monsieur; "surely I must know that name. Stop a moment. I will return to you immediately." Away went the Curé to consult the old Court Calendar; and there finding Lord B——, peer of the realm, returned back to the ragged prisoner, convinced of his identity with the nobleman in question.

"My Lord," said the old gentleman, "Why do you conceal your rank? Of what use can it be? What is your motive for doing so? Your name, you say, is B——. You are a gentleman; and I find, in my Court Calendar, Lord B——, Peer of the Realm. Now, if you are Lord B——, I will furnish you with money and necessaries, and use the interest I have with my friends at Paris to get you out of France."

"I thank you, Sir," replied the prisoner. "I am certainly Lord B——, as you say I am; and if you will perform what you have so kindly offered, the money shall be returned when I arrive in England, by any means you may point out."

All succeeded to the prisoner's desire; and the money was honestly returned to the good Curé, who prides himself upon his own sagacity, and the great benefit arising from the old Court Calendar brought from England sixteen years since.

LETTER XXII.

My dear ——, Hennebon.

You will perceive by the date of this, that we are far advanced in our excursion into Britanny. We had really some difficulty in getting from Josselin, the consequence of the roguery of our host, who was a Norman; for it so chanced that he possessed the only cabriolet (if a sort of jumbling cart deserves the name) the town could boast, and being resolved to get as much by us as he possibly could, he delayed obtaining horses, under divers pretexts, and then it was not until Mr. S—— threatened to procure them from Ploermel that they were brought out. After all, he recompensed himself for our loss, by making us pay a most exorbitant sum both for the horses and cabriolet.

The journey from Josselin to Hennebon lies through a very agreeable country. We passed in our way the abominable and dirty town of Locmine, whence we continued our route till we came to Baud; there the horses rested, and taking a little ragged Breton for our guide, we proceeded to view a curious piece of antiquity in the neighbourhood. Descending a steep hill, through a wild and beautiful wood, thickly grown with beech and chesnut trees, we passed by a copse, and at length arrived at the summit of a gentle eminence, where, placed upon a pedestal, stands a naked female figure, carved in stone, with a kind of stole about her neck; the workmanship is extremely rude and barbarous. This figure, together with a large reservoir,

or stone bath, was found in the side of the hill called *Castanet*, near Baud. It is, most probably, a Celtic remain, and bears a strong resemblance, in its general character, to Egyptian works. On the base of the pedestal are several modern inscriptions, one of them styling this figure the Venus of Armorica.

We continued our journey through a fine wooded country, and at ten o'clock the same night arrived at Hennebon, a town so celebrated in history, from having been defended by the Countess of Montfort in 1342. The massive walls that once surrounded the town, remain in many places entire, and must have been impregnable in their strength and construction.

From the accounts given by Froissart, and other historians, of the English fleet coming up to the walls of Hennebon, at the time the Countess of Montfort was relieved by its arrival, I expected to find the city walls washed by the river at their base; but it is not so: for a large raised bank of earth now intervenes between the fortifications and the river; the latter, from its narrow course, must be considerably diminished, or the fleet, sent from England by Edward the Third, could alone consist of such small craft, as we should, at the present time, deem more adapted for pleasure than military purposes; as it is quite impossible that the river, in the state it now appears, could float down a ship of any burthen. The old town is easily traced, by following the city walls, that are here and there dilapidated, but generally very perfect. Several strong towers flanked these fortifications: the battlements and machicolations in some places remain entire. One of the principal entrances to the city, where a draw-bridge was constructed in front of the towers, is now converted into a prison. The old town was small in circumference, and much commanded by the lofty adjacent

hills. One of its stupendous towers stands in the garden of our inn. Curiosity induced us to measure the thickness of the walls, which we found to be 18 feet, a circumstance that renders their remaining so long without falling entirely into ruin, no longer a matter of surprise. Their massive construction was necessary to resist the force of the powerful battering machines, employed in ages when the use of gunpowder was unknown, or but imperfectly discovered. Hennebon still possesses a very beautiful Gothic church, which does not, however, stand within the precincts of the old town. The door-way, ornamented with the richest work, is remarkable for the light and elegant proportions of its architecture.

In Hennebon, the Revolution has, indeed, made frightful havoc. The fortified entrance, and a heap of ruins alone remain of the fine Abbaie de la Joie, a building in the vicinity. A large church and convent, near the town, were entirely destroyed at that period, with the exception of some few apartments that the Revolutionists appropriated for their own convenience. Around the walls, we observed, painted in large characters, such sentences as these: —" Live Montaigne, the immortaliser of universal union ;" " Destruction to Aristocracy ;" " Live the immortal goddess of reason ;" the words, " justice," " union," equality," " reason," " the sword," " blood," and " liberty," were painted in different parts throughout these rooms, and rude revolutionary scrawlings of soldiers fighting, the guillotine, the attack on the Bastile, &c. were still visible upon the walls.

The people of Hennebon are, like all the Bretons, extremely dirty and barbarous. Would you believe it possible, (and I assure you it is true,) that on my arrival at the inn, I was very civilly asked, if I chose to sleep in the room together with the com-

party, who were expected in the diligence, or if I preferred an apartment to myself! In this hotel, we are not so entirely wretched and comfortless as we have been in some I have already described: indeed, by comparison, it is luxurious; for an easy bed, and clean coverings, are by no means general comforts in Britanny. And I have little doubt that our possessing the best apartments the house can afford, originates from a design upon our purse; for, cheap as all the necessaries of life are in this province, the arrival of a respectable traveller at an inn is an occurrence so rare, and the people are so poor, that they charge him, in every possible way, to the utmost of their power. And I dare say our being English has helped to swell the bills; but, in justice to our dirty hostess at Ploermel, I must say, she was the only honest one we have yet found. Our present landlord's daughter, who is almost too pretty for a Breton, resolving her good gifts shall not be lost, exhibits, what I have of late rarely seen, the phenomenon, in Britanny, of a clean-washed face. Mr. S—— arose early this morning, and going into the kitchen to inquire if we could procure horses to-day, whilst he was speaking to the driver this damsel, in her night-clothes, popped her head out of a wooden box, like an English dog-kennel, where she had been sleeping by the fire-side, and next to a hen-coop containing a brood of fowls:—"*Bon jour, Monsieur,*" exclaimed the young lady; and with perfect ease joined in the conversation that was going on. This little anecdote will give you some idea of the manner in which even the better sort of Bourgeoises live in Britanny.

The environs of Hennebon are indeed delightful, superior even to those of Josselin. The river winds through a rich and fertile country, adorned with hills, valleys, woods, rocks, and water. On

the opposite side the river, near the town, the rocks overhang the stream, in irregular and broken crags. The view of the setting sun, which I last night witnessed from this spot, presented one of the most beautiful objects in nature. The evening was fine, and scarcely a breath of air waved the light foliage of the trees; the clouds, bright and varied with the richest hues of purple and gold, looked as a fiery glowing world; gradually rolling in majestic circles, they passed away, and melted into ether. The western glow of the horizon mingled with the blue expanse, streaked with long lines of retiring light, that gleamed upon the Gothic fretted pinnacles, and the massy broken towers. Here and there a ray of sun threw a yellow tint upon the projecting ridges of the solid and abrupt steeps, or gilded the wooded glen; dark masses of shadow showed imperfectly the broken hollows of the surrounding rocks, and gave an awful grandeur to their forms, while their base was lost in the obscurity below. The waters slept in silence; the air was still and hushed; all nature seemed to pause, while the great animator of her being slowly sunk beneath the purpled west, and left long lingering upon the horizon a broad and ruddy glow of light; till a cloud of thick vapours gradually arose, and shrouded in dim obscurity the distant landscape.

Whilst we were contemplating this delightful scene, memory pictured to the fancy the events of former days, when the gallant Countess so valiantly defended Hennebon; and I amused myself with conjecturing from what tower she watched the arrival of the English fleet. The Countess, who, to use the emphatic words of Froissart, " possessed the courage of a man, and the heart of a lion," upon hearing of the supposed death of her husband, John de Montfort, " notwithstanding the grief she had at

heart," reanimated her soldiers, and taking her infant son in her arms, conjured them not to abandon the helpless child of their Lord, — she clothed herself in armour, and mounting her steed, paraded the town of Hennebon, encouraging the citizens both by her words and example; she then ordered her ladies to take up the pavement of the streets, and to carry the stones to the ramparts, and thence hurl them upon her foes. The same day she evinced her spirit, by an heroic deed of arms, which nearly cost her liberty and life; for, sallying from the town to attack the enemy's camp, her retreat was cut off, by a band of archers; she spurred her courser, and, galloping to a neighbouring castle, conjured the governor to shelter her from pursuit. The Countess, ever active in her measures, collected a re-inforcement of six or seven hundred men, and afterwards returned to Hennebon, where she was joyfully received.

The inhabitants of this beleaguered town, reduced to the extremity of distress, and beholding their walls totter, with the force of the engines of the besiegers, at length thought of offering terms of capitulation: when the bishop of Léon, then remaining with the Countess in Hennebon, treacherously held a secret conference with his nephew Sir Hervé de Léon, who, in support of Charles de Blois's cause, was now stationed before the city walls. In this conference it was agreed that the Pontiff should endeavour to persuade the people, (dispirited as they were by their sufferings,) immediately to open the gates, and admit the army of the Lord Charles. The Countess de Montfort suspected his purpose, and, resolving to act with undisguised firmness, conjured her nobles, and adherents, for the love they owed to God, not to abandon her at this fearful juncture; assuring them, that

would they but hold out a few days longer, she should receive the long expected succours from England. The bishop, in an artful and studied address, endeavoured to counteract her measures; and the nobles remained uncertain what course they should adopt. A dreadful night of suspense followed. The morrow came; Sir Hervé de Léon advanced towards the gates, ready almost to open at his approach, when the gallant Countess, driven to her last hope, ascended a high tower and remained stationary upon its battlements, fixing her anxious look towards the sea. At one moment she fancied the light and passing cloud a distant sail; at another, all hope vanished, when the clear horizon presented no object but the boundless waters. At length she exclaimed, in an eager transport of joy: — "I see the promised succours! they come! they come!" and waving the banner of Britanny in her hand, she swiftly descended from the tower. Her hopes were confirmed, by the arrival of the English fleet, bearing down with full-spread sails, towards the town of Hennebon. This timely relief confirmed in their allegiance the dispirited adherents of De Montfort. The gallant Countess received, with grateful courtesy, the English knight, Sir Walter Manny, and his friends, who performed deeds of heroic valour, and repulsed her foes. Froissart tells us, that, upon Sir Walter's return, the Countess de Montfort came down from the castle to meet him, and his friends, "and with a "most cheerful countenance, kissed Sir Walter Manny, and "all his companions, one after the other, like a noble and "brave dame."

In grateful commemoration of her success, the Countess de Montfort founded an abbey without the walls of the town. The

plot of our opera of the *English Fleet*, is taken from this celebrated defence of Hennebon.

This day, towards evening, we ascended one of those romantic hills on the opposite side of the river, to take a farewell view of the town, where we witnessed a spectacle of such solemn interest, whose peculiar sentiment was rendered so impressive by every surrounding object, that I must not conclude my letter without some notice of it here. Whilst we were contemplating the delightful prospect around us, the faintly-choral chaunt of voices was heard in the distance, and gradually became louder, as the sounds approached; till at length we perceived figures winding up the steep ascent, by a narrow path, towards a little chapel on the summit of the eminence. We drew back to observe them; they were persons following an infant to the grave. A youth, bearing a high silver crucifix, headed the procession; he was attended by several children carrying lighted tapers and the holy water; a blind and venerable man, attired in the robes of a priest, with an erect mien, raised towards Heaven the sightless balls of those eyes, which could no longer receive its light; his right hand was placed upon the head of a child, who guided his steps, and the other pressed upon his bosom, while he chaunted in deep notes the funeral anthem. The coffin of the deceased infant, covered by a white pall, and strewed with flowers, was borne by six young girls dressed in white garments, whose shrill voices broke upon the silence of evening, and awakened the long-reverberating echoes, in tones of melancholy sweetness, that seemed to speak peace to the departed spirit. Of all spectacles calculated to give birth to feelings of the liveliest interest, none, perhaps, can exceed

that of the funeral rites of an infant. As the delicate flower sinks beneath the morning ray, so childhood often seems to fly a perilous and inauspicious world, before its contaminating breath has rifled one sweet, or destroyed one blossom of its purity and innocence.

LETTER XXIII.

My dear ——, Auray.

I am certain you will be pleased to hear we are progressively returning towards Paris, whence we shall proceed to England. I cannot, however, say what time will elapse before I have once more the happiness of embracing my dear parents; and I trust in Providence that no calamity will arise to damp the joy of our meeting. It is our present intention to pass some days in such towns through which we pass, as may present objects of interest to gratify the curiosity of travellers; and I doubt not we shall find many places worthy our attention. We are now at Auray, where you may readily believe I have indulged my fancy in re-peopling with the heroes of ancient story so celebrated a spot.

The natives of this part of Britanny do not appear quite so dirty or miserable as those we have been accustomed to see about the neighbourhood of Ploermel, Hennebon, &c. and begin to look a little more like civilised beings, although the cleanliness of their appearance derives its value alone from comparison with those Bretons we have lately quitted.

Auray is prettily situated in an agreeable country, but of a less romantic character than the vicinity of Hennebon. The Revolution has, as usual, made dreadful havoc in this town. Many interesting buildings and religious houses are entirely destroyed. Of a fine convent and church, founded by the Count de Jasson, a knight of Malta, for the relief of distressed orphans, only sufficient remains to assist the imagination in conjecturing

the former magnificence of the edifice. Fragments of moulder-ing arches, broken columns, and richly carved ornaments, lie scattered within the dilapidated walls; and the ivy-grown remnant of the fretted tracery of a Gothic window alone exists, as a melancholy evidence of ruin. Beneath that vault, where the prayers of orphan innocence were once offered up to Heaven, the owl and the bat now pay their unhallowed orgies to the night.

The Castle of Auray is said by Froissart to have been originally erected by King Arthur: for many buildings in Britanny, as in Wales, bore the name of that hero for their founder. I know not where this castle stood; part of a very ancient wall still overhangs the river immediately within sight of the town, and yet retains the appellation of *Le Vieux Château.* But, if Frois-sart's account of it is to be relied upon, this ancient wall could not possibly have belonged to any part of the building. That historian tells us, the English and Bretons formed themselves in order of battle in the rear of Auray castle. How shall we reconcile this account with the reputed site of the edifice, when we find the battle was fought upon a level plain, three miles distant from the town, quite in an opposite direction, and on the other side the river. Froissart, who, most likely, had never visited the scene of action, and whose accounts were generally drawn from the relations given to him by other persons, might probably be mistaken in his geography (as he often is;) or some castle must have existed, of which no trace at the present time remains.

The hill above this fragment of the ruined wall commands a very delightful and extensive view of the river, serpentining, in picturesque meanderings, for many miles through a richy wooded

country. The hills slope gently towards the stream; while the vessels that glide slowly along it, their sails brightening in the gleams of sun, give a lively effect to the scene. Adjacent to the town (which lies at the base of this eminence), a few irregular and broken rocks skirt the margin of the river; farm-houses, cottages, and little hamlets, scattered in the distance, agreeably diversify the vivid colours of meadow, copse, and glen. The landscape appears closed in by a long chain of blue hills that forms the horizon.

The chief motive that induced our stay at Auray arose from the historical interest of the town. We made every possible enquiry to discover the exact site where the celebrated battle was fought, and at length succeeded through accidentally meeting with a rustic character in Auray. Although you will smile, perhaps, at my introducing the mention of so humble a personage, but in the course of our rambling adventures, I have, alas! few dignified names to swell out a page, and have neither nobles nor princes, like some modern travellers, to thank either privately or publicly for their sundry kindnesses and attention. I was rambling this morning alone, and, I confess, although no Don Quixote, castle-hunting was my object; when an old man, a very Breton in appearance, politely accosted me in good French, and offered his assistance, as I appeared to be wandering in search of some place. When I told him I was endeavouring to find out the ruins of Auray Castle, his countenance expressed a pleasurable surprise, and he begged that, as he had the honour of being born a Frenchman, he might be the happy means of ending my enquiry. Mr. S—— joined us whilst he was speaking, when the old man informed him, that no ruin of a castle excepting the wall above the river, existed near Auray, and that the great battle

was fought where the convent of the Chartreuse now stands. We found this poor Frenchman, whose appearance bespoke extreme poverty, far better informed than many of the priests, who had at sundry times undertaken to be our guides. He begged we would accompany him to his little dwelling, where he promised to show us some curious books, and more especially one which gave an account of the action, and mentioned the foundation of the Chartreuse in commemoration of that event. This account agrees very circumstantially with Froissart's narrative; and having said so much about the historical events of Auray, I must, in order to render my letter to you interesting, when visiting the spot, briefly notice the most remarkable occurrences of the battle.

The young Count de Montfort was, before that period, espoused to Mary, the daughter of Edward the Third of England. The gallant Sir John Chandos had been sent by his royal master, Edward, into Britanny with a numerous force, to assist Sir Oliver de Clisson and others, in supporting the young Earl's claim to the dukedom; as his adversary the Lord Charles de Blois was collecting a powerful force to oppose him, assisted by the famous Bertrand du Guesclin and other lords. The flower of chivalry composed both armies; their soldiers marched to the field in full confidence of success, their arms glittering, and their pennons flying; the sound of trumpets, and the neighing of steeds, accompanied their exclamations of "God and St. Ives, the right of Britanny!" Beaumanoir, the hero of the battle of Trente, (who afterwards became prisoner to the English,) was then upon his parole of honour, not to bear arms against De Montfort: he alone, therefore, was unarmed, and rode from time to time to the chiefs of either party, vainly endeavouring to promote a peace. Sir John Chandos headed the troops of De

Montfort. The battle seemed on the point of commencing, when Beaumanoir succeeded in obtaining a day's truce.

During this interval, Charles de Blois encouraged his men, and with a gay and cheerful mien saluted his followers and friends. On the part of the English, the time passed in soliciting Sir John Chandos not to hearken to any proposals that might be offered to obtain a peace. The knights represented to him they had expended their fortunes in De Montfort's cause, and hoped, by a decisive day, either to re-establish them, or to fall for ever. On the morrow, the troops of both princes were armed, and eager to engage. Masses were said, and the sacrament administered to all who were disposed to receive it. The order of battle was arranged, as on the previous day; Beaumanoir once more essayed to bring the contest to a friendly issue, by procuring a cessation of arms; but Sir John Chandos bid him retire, averring, that De Montfort would that day be Duke of Britanny, or leave his body on the field. When De Montfort, who observed Beaumanoir retreating, enquired of Chandos the subject of their conference, Sir John purposely replied,—"A defiance given by your adversary." "By St. George, then," exclaimed the young prince, "we will begin the fray: order our pennons to advance, and God help the true cause."

At the hour of eight in the morning, the onset began. Each man carried a lance in his hand, and a battle-axe by his side; every lord was clothed in full array, his bright arms glittering in the sun, and his pennon borne before him by an esquire.

The English archers loosed their arrows with unerring skill; but the Bretons warded off their deadly force, by their massive shields. Many gallant deeds were that day achieved; but whoever fell, unless immediately assisted, found great difficulty in rising

again, owing to the cumbrous weight of his arms. The engagement was fierce and desperate, for every man seemed resolved to meet death or victory. De Montfort's battalion was thrown into confusion, when Sir Hugh Calvely perceiving them giving way, drove them back by the exertions of the rear-guard, which he commanded. Sir John Chandos, distinguished alike by the firmness of undaunted courage and the wisdom of dispassionate conduct, advised De Montfort in the measures he should adopt, and nothing was that day attempted, unless dictated by him. Sir Oliver de Clisson dealt such deadly strokes with the battle-axe he wielded, that none, however hardy, durst approach him: he advanced so forward, that he was in peril of falling into the enemy's power; surrounded by a host of adversaries, with great prowess he fought his way through their ranks, but not until the vizor of his bacinet was struck off by the blow of an axe, which deprived him for ever after of the sight of one of his eyes. Sir John Chandos, who was of strong stature, and well limbed, fought with the valour worthy his distinguished name; he headed the last great charge that proved fatal to the Bretons, who began to fly in dreadful disorder, before their inflamed pursuers. Chandos then advanced towards the battalion of Du Guesclin, who still maintained his ground: a fierce and bloody contest followed; and Du Guesclin, whose name had long spread terror through the land, became a prisoner to the English knight. Disdaining to injure so gallant a foe, Chandos gave orders that his life should be held sacred. The standard-bearer of De Blois was slain, and the pennon fell to the ground. The Lord Charles, undismayed midst the slaughter of his adherents, and the ill success of those surviving friends, who were flying, or made captive all around him, snatched up the fallen standard, and resting one arm upon it, fought almost singly to

the last; he received a mortal wound, and at length gave up a spirit that yielded alone to death. His bastard son, John de Blois, never abandoned his father during the fight, and at last fell dead by his body on the field.

After the battle, De Montfort, and several of his knights were refreshing themselves, beneath the shelter of some trees, where the count's standard was displayed, when Chandos, Knolles, and Calvely advanced towards him with a cheerful aspect, and greeted him, saying, "My Lord, praise God; for you have, this day, "conquered and gained the inheritance of Britanny."—"Sir John "Chandos," replied the count, "it is to your valour and prudence "that I am indebted for the good fortune of this day; for, after "God, whose name be praised, I owe more to you than to all "the rest of the world;' and so saying, he extended towards Chandos his hand. The heralds then arrived, who had been dispatched, in company with several knights, to examine the surcoats of the slain; the dead being recognised by their emblazoned arms. The heralds brought intelligence, that the body of Charles de Blois was found amongst the slaughtered on the field. The young Earl immediately arose, exclaiming, "Lords, conduct me to the spot. I shall have as much pleasure to see him dead as alive." When they gained the place, De Montfort ordered the shield, which the heralds had placed over De Blois, to be removed, and casting upon the lifeless body a sorrowful look, paused awhile, and at length said, "Ah! Lord Charles, sweet cousin, how much "mischance has fallen to Britanny, from your having supported "your pretensions by force of arms!—God save me; I am truly "unhappy at finding you thus low, but now this cannot be re-"called:" so saying, De Montfort cast down his head, and burst into tears. Sir John Chandos drew him from the body, and

gave him comfort, by an assurance that De Blois' death was necessary to establish his inheritance in Britanny.

The Count then ordered that the corpse of the Lord Charles should be interred with all honour and respect due to his rank at Guingamp; for he was a good man, and a most loyal and valiant knight. The body of De Blois was, after a time, sanctified and worshipped as a saint and martyr; but Pope Urban the Fifth refused to confirm his canonization, as he had died in the field. The battle of Auray was fought A.D. 1364.

Historians relate, that the greyhound of the Lord Charles, who was with him in the field before the commencement of the combat, abandoned his master, and went over to De Montfort. This being considered, in those days of superstitious credulity, an omen of the decision of the action, the house of De Montfort ever after retained the greyhound for their badge. A similar remarkable occurrence, of the greyhound of Richard the Second abandoning his royal master, and following the usurping Bolingbrooke, is mentioned by Froissart. The relation of such omens seems to have been the fashion of the times.

Having gained the desired information, we set out to visit the spot where this memorable action took place. After walking some distance, we turned into a road sheltered by high trees, and perceived a priest, attended by a party of nuns, advancing towards us. From their costume, we knew these sisters were of the order of La Sagesse, who perform the good offices of Christian charity. The Abbess led the way, dressed in a long grey gown; her head covered with a stiffly starched white cap that projected on either side. Her rank was conspicuous, by the long rosary suspended from her girdle, and the large gold crucifix that glittered upon her bosom. We saluted the Abbess,

as she passed along, — a token of respect generally paid to her rank; which she returned as great men do the salutation of their dependants, — with an air of proud humility.

The meeting with this party convinced us we were in the right road for the convent of the Chartreuse; and, after advancing some steps, we came into a narrow lane, and there remarked the mouldering and dilapidated remains of a stone cross, which the revolutionists had thrown down. We paused to observe it. No inscription appeared; but this was the spot, marked by the ancient chronicler, where the body of the Lord Charles was found after the battle by the heralds, who recognised his emblazoned arms. The ground about this cross has been inclosed; and the plain, which once rang with the din of battle, now left in peace, waves with the rich burthen of the golden ear, or resounds to the lively carol of the lark, or the peasant's morning song. While the violent policy of man subverts the harmony of society, and destroys thousands in its course; while his caprice continually changes the order and custom of those few things dependent on his will, Nature, unruffled by his feuds, or his career, uniform in her operations, holds on her course, immutable, harmonious, and sublime. She presents the same aspect, at his triumph, or at his fall; and looks forth in all her loveliness, when himself, and his labours, lie low and forgotten in their original dust.

After rambling about this spot, we turned into an avenue that leads to the Chartreuse, and gained permission at the lodge to see the interior of the convent. When we entered, the nuns of La Sagesse were instructing the deaf and dumb, according to the plan of the Abbé Sicard at Paris. With the pupils who were far advanced, they carried on a very quick interchange of ideas, by

using one hand only for the purpose of talking with the fingers. And it appeared to me, (but I may be mistaking,) that common sentences, such as, "Who are these strangers?" were expressed by a single sign. A little boy was receiving his first rudiments, when a sister brought to him two pieces of wood, the one of a hard, and the other of a softer substance. She made him feel both, and wrote upon a slate the word *wood*, and then pointed to the pieces. She wrote afterwards, *hard wood*, and made the child strike his hand against the firmer piece; and in such manner continued her lesson. Another nun was instructing a girl in the difference that existed between *positive convictions*, and those that are induced from the evidence of another. Her method was ingenious; but as I did not understand her hieroglyphical signs, I shall but ill describe it. I can only tell you she began with placing a little book upon the table, and then carried the girl away from it; by her signs she seemed to imply this was the positive conviction of an act. The sister then made the girl shut her eyes, and, whilst they were closed, concealed the book in her own pocket. More signs passed; and I fancy they implied that the girl was to believe an act she did not witness, from the evidence of another. She then took it from her pocket, and gave the child the book. I dare say, persons who know the plan would laugh at my account of it; but I mention it to you, because the nun told me it was preparatory to instructing her in the knowledge of the existence of God and Christianity. The sisters of La Sagesse attend the sick, and instruct the poor, the same as the nuns of La Charité. These useful orders were patronised by the great Napoleon, who was accustomed to say that the many excellent charitable institutions England possessed, wanted only the care and attention of such an order to render them perfect.

The remains of the unfortunate emigrant royalists who perished in the affair of Quiberon Bay, some time after that event, were removed to the convent of the Chartreuse: a monumental slab is inscribed to their memory. The church is exceedingly plain; it was erected upon the foundation of the original building that De Montfort raised, in grateful acknowledgement of his victory. One of the nuns led us through the cloisters, adorned with paintings, representing the miraculous acts of St. Bruno, who instituted the order of the Chartreuse. I remembered having seen the original pictures, from which these are copies, in the Louvre collection at Paris. The convent, in its present state, possesses no other interest than that of its site; but, were you the Pontiff of Rome, you would excommunicate me for saying this, as there is not a more wonder working altar in all Christendom, than that of St. Anne, at the Chartreuse. They tell me, in this neighbourhood, if you pray but at her shrine, whatever you solicit will be granted. Our inn-keeper's daughter offers her prayers very constantly to St. Ann; and I fancy, from her best cap and jacket being worn upon these occasions, and the soft air of the gay young man who accompanies her to the church-door, I could, without witchcraft, tell the subject of her devotions; more especially as she has assured me, in proof of the efficacy of St. Ann's blessing upon her shrine, that a certain young gentlewoman of Auray, who feared dying an old maid, very earnestly begged the saint to grant her a husband: St. Ann's bounty being equal to her power, she most kindly sent the young lady three several husbands within the space of five short happy years. 'Tis well we have no such shrines in England, or, Heaven bless us! there would be no getting near them.

LETTER XXIV.

My dear ——, Auray.

You will perceive by the date of this letter, that I am still writing to you from Auray, where, however, we shall not remain longer than to-morrow. You will not, I am certain, accuse me of neglecting to give you all the information I can, relative to the country through which we pass: I find an amusement in writing, independent of the pleasure I trust it may afford you; for the evenings are now too dark, to induce a ramble out of doors, and there are no attractions or amusements within, excepting those we endeavour to create to while away the hours.

I must now recur to the excursion of this morning, although it has been a source of some terror to me, as I expected every moment the voiture would be upset, by the broken fragments of rock, over which we were obliged to pass in the road. We made our excursion, for the purpose of visiting *Carnac*, a stupendous remain of antiquity; and were so much interested by viewing this monument, most probably of Celtic history, or superstition, that I shall here give you a correct and particular account of it, derived from local observation; and you will find it by no means agrees with the exaggerated prints in Monsieur Cambray's book, published in 1805, entitled, *Monumens Celtiques*. Perhaps the singularly happy faculty that gentleman possessed, of seeing things in a new and extraordinary way, might have greatly magnified, in his eyes, these Celtic remains, so that the stones grew in proportion to his imagination; for certainly they never were so seen, before or since; and the figures he introduces in the

prints to show by comparison the proportional height of these antiquities, appear creeping about no bigger than mice at their base.

Monsieur Cambray, like all great men, apparently must have been constantly looking upwards, or have passed blindfold over the ground of Carnac, when he declares that not a fragment of stone or a flint is to be found upon its site. What wonderful nothings do such learned gentry find out! Had M. Cambray chanced to break his shins over some of the large and innumerable pieces of rock or stone, that literally strew the ground, he might perhaps have given another account. Monsieur Cambray is likewise a great lover of tracing the progress of improvements, &c.; but he forgets that the first step to all improvement lies in truth, — a thing probably too vulgar for so great a mind. How much are we indebted to him, for his so ingeniously comparing the English to that nation of paper lanterns, the Chinese! How kindly does he remind us of obligations, and vast benefits we never knew! According to the liberal abuse this gentleman bestows on the English, we are indebted to his nation for all our arts and sciences. The Count de Laborde has, since M. Cambray, published some engravings of Carnac, representing the stones much larger than they really are, but they are mere dwarfs compared with those of his predecessor.

We hired a cabriolet, and left Auray early this morning; besides the driver, a man accompanied us, who walked by the side of the voiture, in order to render his assistance in preventing it from being upset by the large, loose and broken rocks that strewed the way, and lie in confused heaps about the road. After travelling three leagues through a desolate and wild country, we arrived at a spot about a mile from the

sea-shore, where this curious Celtic antiquity remains a monument at once of the power and insufficiency of man; for his own stupendous work has long outlived all memory of its founder or its history. Carnac is infinitely more extensive than Stone Henge, but of a ruder formation; the stones are much broken, fallen down, and displaced; they consist of *eleven rows*, of unwrought pieces of rock or stone, merely set up an end in the earth, without any pieces crossing them at top. These stones are of great thickness, but not exceeding nine or twelve feet in height; there may be some few fifteen feet. The rows are placed from fifteen to eighteen paces from each other, extending in length (taking rather a semicircular direction) above half a mile, on unequal ground, and towards one end upon a hilly site. The semicircular direction was probably accidental; as, from their situation, it was not possible to see all the ground at once, in order to range them in a straight line. When the length of these rows is considered, there must have been nearly three hundred stones in each, and there are eleven rows: this will give you some idea of the immensity of the work, and the labour such a construction required. It is said that there are above four thousand stones now remaining. We remarked three *tumuli*,—probably the graves of chiefs; they are formed of large stones placed upon each other, on a raised bed of earth. In some places the irregular line of the work is broken, by the ground having been cleared for fields, in others the stones that have fallen were broken up and carried away for building. More injury has, perhaps, been done to this stupendous Celtic work by the hand of man than by that of time. The place was peculiarly well chosen for obtaining materials to construct such a monument, as the ground for miles round is full of rock. We could gain no in-

formation from the people, relative to any thing that might have been found; for, in answer to whatever we said to the peasantry, we received replies in the Breton tongue, of which we could only articulately distinguish the word *gaelic*, and this was repeated whenever we accosted them. I have been informed by a priest, but I know not how far it may be correct, that the word *Carnac* signifies, literally, in the Breton language, a *field of flesh*: if this be the true meaning of the word, it would lead one to conjecture that these stones, were placed in memory of some great battle, or as memorials in a common cemetery of the dead. The people have a singular custom whenever their cattle are diseased of coming amongst these stones, to pray to St. Cornelius for their recovery. Such a practice may be a remnant of Pagan superstition continued in Christian times; but, I must remark, that St. Cornelius is the patron saint of the neighbouring church.

I cannot learn that the peasantry of this country have any traditions about Carnac; and I must here observe, that no relations or accounts, given either by the poor or more enlightened people of Britanny, can be relied upon. From the village of Carnac adjacent to the curious Celtic remain, you have an extensive view of the sea, and the projecting line of land, that extends along Quiberon Bay. When about quitting this wretched little village, we witnessed the singular funeral of a poor Breton. The body was placed within a coffin of rough boards rudely nailed together, and carried to the church door in a cart drawn by two oxen, yoked to each other with hay-bands. The funeral retinue consisted of a few women completely enveloped by long black cloaks.

The Breton language appears to me, from the number of

French words I continually hear spoken with it, far more corrupted than the Welsh. I imagine it probably arises from the people of Britanny holding a freer intercourse, and having mixed more with the French, than the Welsh formerly did with the English; this may be accounted for, as Britanny is certainly a country easy of access, nor is it defended or insulated by those barrier mountains that characterise Wales.

The Bretons do not resemble in countenance either the Normans or French, nor have they much of the Welsh character. They are a rude, uncivilised, simple people, dirty and idle in their habits. Their costume is generally a broad-flapped hat, beneath which their hair hangs long and loose; a coat lined with scarlet, and sometimes the upper part of the coat of dark mulberry colour, and the other lower half or skirts of the same colour, but of a faded tint, this diversity appearing to be entirely the effect of taste or choice, and not that of necessity; a white waistcoat, lined also with scarlet, and a broad belt round the waist, corresponding with the colour of the lining, or sometimes plaided, like a Scotch cloak. The goat-skin dress is also very commonly worn, particularly in Bas Bretagne. Very few go barefooted; wooden shoes, being generally used by men, women, and children. The women are invariably dressed in the peculiar costume I have already described; it differs here and there, but not importantly, in some of the districts. Many of the women of the very poorest kind, wear this dress till it becomes so dirty, patched, tattered, and ragged, that you can scarcely trace what it had originally been; and I have seen several children so wretchedly off for clothing, that they run about almost in a state of nature. The women who appear tolerably respectable, and are dressed decently in their singular costume, look florid and healthy; while

those attired in the ragged garments, bear a squalid and meagre aspect: this arises, I am induced to believe from the greater dirt and poverty of the latter class.

The chesnut abounds in Britanny; there are many large forests composed entirely of that tree: their produce, boiled in milk, supplying a means of subsistence for the poor during the greater part of the year. The people collect the chesnuts in sacks, and pile them up within their cabins: several families are even so needy, that they seldom taste the luxury of bread; but these are amongst the children of wretchedness in the extreme degree. I am informed that, in the neighbourhood of Brest, the lower orders resort to acorns, as well as chesnuts, for food, which have some nutritious quality when boiled in milk. The Breton houses (excepting in the towns) are generally built of mud, without order or convenience. It is absolutely a common thing, in Britanny, for men, women, children, and animals, all to sleep together in the same apartment, upon no other resting place, than that of the substantial earth, covered with some straw. We once saw, near Josselin, a man drive into his cabin a cow, and a horse, followed by a pig, and afterwards entering himself, he shut to the door.

I can confidently aver, from my own observation of the Welsh and the Bretons, that the latter are by no means so civilised, so industrious, so rich, or well being, and are in all respects inferior to the Welsh. Indeed, they do not appear as if springing from the same origin, and are but one degree above nature in an almost savage state; while their dirty habits, (too filthy to bear description,) and their wretched manner of living, sink them in a great measure, below the rank of human beings. The Bretons have no bards, no poetic legends, no traditions, like the Welsh, which,

however wild, or improbable, display the genius and imagination of that simple and venerable people. You will ask me, perhaps, why I speak thus confidently of the Bretons, when I am ignorant of their native language; but in Britanny, the people who live in the towns, speak alike French, and Patois, as in Wales, where the inhabitants of cities are equally conversant with the Welsh and English. During my excursion in Wales, I heard continually some recurrence to their ancient history, some tradition, or legendary tale; but I have never met with a single instance of this kind in Britanny.

The Bretons inhabit a fine country, capable of rendering them prosperous and wealthy, but little cultivated by their own exertions; and they owe their chief support to the abundant forests of chesnut, and the indigenous productions of their soil. Vast tracts of country appear overgrown with wood, in some parts impenetrably thick and wild; others, where a richly laden harvest would amply repay the labours of the plough, remains totally neglected. The Breton grovels on from day to day, and from year to year, in the same supine idleness and dirt. If you chance to meet a Breton, and ask him why, when there are so many groves of apple-trees he does not make cider, (for the greater quantity is imported from Normandy,) he will tell you, his father never did so. If you say, why not grow more corn, he answers, I have gathered chesnuts from a boy.

In some parts of this country, I have been informed by an intelligent Frenchman, who is well acquainted with the people and their language, that the Bretons wear their wretched clothing unchanged till it literally rots upon their backs. A few days since I was rambling near the town, when a poor woman, who spoke French as well as Patois, came up to me,

and begged relief in the former tongue. She was accompanied by two of her children, who were even offensively begrimed in dirt. I gave her a trifle, and asked her why she suffered her infants to be in such a filthy state. The woman answered with perfect simplicity, that they were not worse than other people's, that the river run as far off as the bottom of her garden, and that she should have the trouble of taking them to it, if they were to be washed. Such a reply is so perfectly characteristic of a Breton born, that it needs no comment. If the people of this country are more poor and wretched than those of other provinces, it arises from their total want of industry and exertion.

Certainly the present race have greatly degenerated from their ancestors; the Bretons were once a more civilized and flourishing people; their decline may be attributed, in a great measure, to the loss of their independence. Formerly Bretagne possessed its own sovereign, immunities, and laws, but from the time this province became annexed to the crown of France, they lost, with their liberty and importance, the energy of a free people, and gradually sunk into poverty and neglect. Most of our ancient metrical romances derive their origin from the genius and effusions of the Breton bards. Many of the early Norman poets avowed the subjects of their lays were likewise borrowed from the Bretons; but at the present time they have not in Britanny any legendary songs or poems that sprung from their bards. I say this, because I have made every possible inquiry to gain full information, and I could never learn that they retained any portion, however obscure, of their ancient poetry or traditions; and I think it most probable that, in the

journey we have made through this province, I should have become acquainted with the existence of such legends, were they still preserved.

On the early state of Britanny yôu probably expect I should say something; but remote as I am here from all literary authorities, I must decline entering into a formal disquisition on the origin of the Bretons, and shall content myself with giving you an opinion on the subject hitherto inedited, but which entirely corresponds with my own. " While we discard as " apocryphal the relation, that the inhabitants of Britanny owe " their origin to a colony transported thither from our island " under Maximus, in the year of our redemption 384, or that a " century later, Armorica was peopled by the fugitive Britons, " who sought an asylum from the Saxon usurpation, we will " not deny but the concurrent testimony of some writers render " it probable that such emigrations actually took place; but the " wanderers found in Armorica, a kindred nation, alike in man- " ners as in language, exhibiting, as the white cliffs of their " opposed shores, although dissevered by the ocean, indubitable " marks of an unity of source. For the authority of Tacitus, " further confirmed by that of Bede, ascribes one common " origin to the Britons and Gauls. The very appellation of " *Galles*, bestowed by the French on the Welsh, confirms this " opinion. The identity of language existing between them " has been established in a most convincing manner by the " father of our English antiquaries, in the introduction to his " Britannia. The agreement between the Patois, or Bas Breton " tongue and the Welsh, is too obvious to need the support of " any strained analogy, their only difference appears to be, that

" on the former a larger portion of the language of the Franks " (itself a compound of the Latin and Teutonic) has been " engrafted. The ancient appellation of this district was merely " a latinized form of a Celtic term, — *Ar mor*, signifying upon " the sea, *morinwyr*, dwellers upon the sea-coast; whence " Armorica, Morini. — ' *Extremique hominum morini*,' Virg. " Æn. 8. The more modern appellation must have been derived " from the emigration of the Britons before alluded to, on the " invasion of their island by the Saxons. No mention of the " inhabitants of Armorica, under the designation of Britons, " occurring till about that period.

" The elegant Gibbon, rejecting the alleged abject state of " the Britons on the secession of the Romans from their terri- " tory, furnishes us with the following summary of the history " of the insular and continental Britons at that period; " and in this opinion he has been followed by succeeding " writers of repute: — ' Whilst Italy was ravaged by the " Goths, and a succession of feeble tyrants oppressed " the provinces beyond the Alps, the British island sepa- " rated itself from the body of the Roman empire. The " regular forces which had guarded that remote province had " been gradually withdrawn, and Britain was abandoned, without " defence, to the Saxon pirates, and the savages of Ireland " and Caledonia. The Britons, reduced to this extremity, no " longer relied on the doubtful aid of a declining monarchy. " They assembled in arms, repelled the invaders, and rejoiced " in the important discovery of their own strength. Afflicted " by similar calamities, and actuated by the same spirit, the " Armorican provinces (a name which comprehended the " maritime countries of Gaul between the Loire and the

" Seine) resolved to imitate the example of the neighbouring
" island. They expelled the Roman magistrates, who acted
" under the authority of the usurper Constantine, and a free
" government was established among a people who had so
" long been subject to the arbitrary will of a master.' "

LETTER XXV.

Vannes.

We are now, my dear ——, journeying towards the banks of the Loire, and purpose quitting this place to-morrow night. Our excursion to Vannes has afforded us great pleasure. The town is delightfully situated in a fine country. The walls of the city, intended for defence in times of feudal warfare, are yet very perfect, and convey a better idea of an ancient fortified town than any place I have yet seen. The houses are built of stone; but by no means of modern date. I have observed nothing very remarkable in the churches here, except it be the dress of the Sacristan, which still displays the custom of days long past, being, like that of Ploermel, *mi-partie* red and blue.

The walks about Vannes are exceedingly agreeable, and present fine combinations of picturesque objects, such as a painter would select. One of these is peculiarly adapted for the pencil, and may be seen from an eminence near the city. A natural bower of lofty beech and chesnut trees form a delightful canopy, spreading their large and thick branches all around. Broken crags of rock, overgrown with moss and vegetation, hang above the river that flows beneath, reflecting every object, like a fairy world, on its glassy and unruffled surface. The high and tapering spires of the cathedral, with several venerable Gothic towers, appear rising above the autumnal verdure of some majestic trees. On the opposite bank, the city walls skirt the margin of the stream; — their grey and machicolated battlements

beautifully contrasted with the broad green masses of ivy that cling to their base.

It affords me some amusement, in the way of novelty, that the great fair of Vannes happens to be at this time. The town and the market really present a very diverting scene of mirth and hilarity, — thronged, as they are, by people arrayed in their holiday attire. The dress, in this part of Britanny, is much the same as I have already described, but of a gayer decoration, many of the women having their jackets, &c. trimmed with a sort of tinsel resembling gold lace. From the window of my chamber I have a full view of the lively throng. The bagpipe, an instrument common enough in Britanny, is at this moment accompanying, with all its detestable drone, the musical chorus of a great drum, sounded to attract the notice of the multitude towards the portable *magasin* of a wandering charlatan, who sells physic both for the body and soul, dealing alike in miraculous drugs and still more miraculous saints. An old woman, attired in the very emblems of Spring, her cap surmounted with flowers, is entertaining a party of young girls, something like our gypsies, with foreboding to them the certainty of good husbands; while their eager looks and smiling aspect betray their confidence in such pleasing hopes. This woman's thin emaciated figure; her brown, shrivelled, and parched visage, so decked with finery, conveys to my fancy the perfect resemblance of an Egyptian mummy, with all its gilded envelope, that had I chanced to meet her in the Museum at Paris, I should have taken her for an importation of M. Denon's from Thebes. Her words, like the sybils of old, are held sacredly prophetic; and they tell me she is remarkable for her fluent harangues: but, with all her eloquence, I fancy she must be looked upon as an

epitaph, that speaks finely, yet still puts one always in mind of mortality itself. Another aged Breton, who professes to cure *la gale*, distributes her potions, and her cider (with which she regales all comers) out of the same measure, and accommodates her customers with roasted chesnuts or wooden shoes, The Bretons are a most rude race of people. Their gaiety even partakes, in a greater degree, of the character of savage wildness than that of animated enjoyment.

The Revolution has, as usual, made sad destructive work in Vannes. Nearly all the Gothic edifices were destroyed at that period. In the ruins of the church of the Cordeliers (now converting into the garden of a private house), Mr. S—— discovered the broken and shattered remains of the statue that had formerly been placed upon the tomb of Arthur Duke of Britanny. The following inscription once appeared engraven on the stone table that supported the figure, but does not now exist.

" Cy gist le large Prince Artur Duc de Bretagne, qui trepassa au Chateau de l'Isle le XXVII Joust MCCCXII. Priez Dieu que son herme soet en repos. Amen."

Amongst other fragments may be seen a mutilated effigy, said to represent the Countess de Montfort, the heroine of Hennebon; but it could never have been designed for her memorial, as it is not of her time, and I believe she was buried at Vitry, near Rennes. While Mr. S—— with true antiquarian spirit is employed in delineating the shattered remains of Arthur's statue, I take the opportunity of writing to you; and *apropos*, before we leave the subject of antiquities, I must tell you, that in the neighbourhood of Vannes, stands the ruined abbey of Saint Gildas, of which that celebrated lover Abelard was the superior: they say, too, the chair he used to occupy, is still seen within

its walls. Of the chateau D'Ermine, once so considerable a palace, in Vannes, scarcely a vestige now remains: it was with some difficulty we discovered its scite, and the inconsiderable portion that yet exists. The chateau D'Ermine, was formerly connected with the town walls; and I have been shown, by a French gentleman, the archway (now blocked up) situated above the deep fossé, through which it is recorded De Clisson passed, after so narrowly escaping death. As I am certain you are not acquainted with the circumstance to which I allude, and believing the relation of it may afford you some gratification, when noticing the antiquities of Vannes, I shall here give you the following brief account.

Long after the battle of Auray, by one of those changes, so common in political states, Sir Oliver de Clisson became a bitter enemy to the English; nor was he entirely subjected to the obedience of John de Montfort, then reigning Duke of Britanny. The English, at the solicitation of the Earl, had sent over large forces, to assist him in opposing the tyranny of the French King; but having before their arrival compromised with France, De Montfort suffered the English forces to endure every hardship and want, without affording them relief. The threatened vengeance of England alarmed his fears, and resolved him to attempt by some master-stroke of policy, regaining the favour he had lost. Considering therefore how deadly a hatred the English court cherished towards De Clisson, he determined to offer the expiation of his own offence, by the murder of Sir Oliver. To accomplish this treacherous purpose, he solemnly convened an assembly of Breton nobles, to be held at Vannes, and amongst others particularly invited, with every show of amity, De Clisson, De Beaumanoir, and De Laval; receiving these guests with the

most kind and condescending hospitality, they entertained no suspicion of his purpose, and before their departure from Vannes, invited him and his court to grace a magnificent banquet they had prepared.

Towards the conclusion of the feast, De Montfort mentioned the chateau d'Ermine, the new ducal palace he was building in Vannes, and solicited De Clisson, who was an excellent judge of masonry, to go over the edifice with him. The unsuspecting Baron fell into the snare, and readily consented to accompany the Duke, attended by Beaumanoir and Laval. De Montfort, under pretext of conversing with these nobles apart, induced Sir Oliver to visit the keep alone, where he was no sooner ascended, than several armed men, who were concealed in order to surprise him, suddenly rushed upon the Baron, and forcibly dragging him into another apartment, placed heavy irons upon his limbs. Beaumanoir, and Laval, hearing a loud outcry from above, suspected some violent design against their friend; and turning towards De Montfort to demand an explanation, his quivering lip and pallid aspect confirmed the suspicions they had formed. "For God's sake," exclaimed Laval, "what is this? Do not, I implore you, harm De Clisson!" "Lord De Laval," said the Earl, "mount quickly your horse — go hence where you list; this is no affair to meddle with." "Never," rejoined Laval; "I will not depart without Sir Oliver." Beaumanoir then enquired where he was. The Duke answered him, by drawing a dagger from beneath his vest; and, clenching it with a firm grasp, advanced towards the astonished Beaumanoir; regarding him fiercely, he exclaimed, "Hark thee, Beaumanoir, — would'st thou be like thy master?" "Aye, lord," replied the knight; "but his keeping must be good, if justice hold the ward." De Montfort paused, and Beaumanoir observing

the Duke half frantic, from the workings of a turbulent and baneful passion, hoped by supplication to move his soul to pity: he threw himself at his royal master's feet, and thus bespoke him fairly:—"My Lord, the great opinion that we had of your honour, and true nobility of heart, brought us hither in your company. God's will be done, but not the rash suggestions of a distempered passion; dishonour not yourself; break not the oath of princes, lest men should deem them false, and so misdoubt their trust." "Go then, Beaumanoir," exclaimed the Duke; "thou shalt have nor better, nor worse than thy master." Beaumanoir was instantly seized, and loaded with irons. When this unjust and violent act became known throughout Vannes, the Earl's conduct was universally censured; but such was his power, and the terror it inspired, that none durst interpose, "between the lion, and his wrath."

The same night De Montfort appointed for the perpetration of the murders both of De Clisson and Beaumanoir; three several times were the irons taken from the limbs of Sir Oliver, to lead him forth to execution, according as the Duke's fluctuating purpose wavered in a mind, yet young in blood. De Laval, who remained with De Montfort, alternately argued, soothed, conjured, and even reproached him, still entreating De Clisson's life might be spared. At length he threw himself at his feet, and implored that, for God's love, Sir Oliver's blood might not blot his princely name: "If he has wronged you," said Laval, "why let him answer it, even to the death, but by a fair and open course of arms; the sword of De Clisson, that helped to place the crown of Britanny upon your head, can defend the justice of its master's cause. Your quarrel cannot be just against him." "Go your way, Laval," replied De Montfort. "If 'tis not

justice, let me then show cruelty; for I am resolved he dies." "If you are," answered Laval, "there lives not a man in Britanny, but will curse you: Richard, or his English court, will not thank you for the murder of De Clisson, to whom you gave the rights of hospitality, fed at his board, drank from his cup, and then with unwashed hands from the meal, bathed them in his blood." De Montfort, to rid himself of the importunate solicitations of Laval, bid him go, saying, he would think upon this affair in the morning. The Earl then retired to his chamber and sent for one of his dependants, an esquire, to whom he gave orders, that as soon as the inhabitants of the castle were sunk into sleep, the work of blood should be accomplished.

During the night, at that still hour, when silence and darkness, convey a solemn interest to the mind, and call up the peaceful reflections of innocence, or awaken the terrific images of guilt, the passion of De Montfort calmed; he saw and shuddered at the abyss of horror into which he had plunged his soul; he paced the room in violent agitation; the terrors of his mind shook the seat of reason, and thrilled through every fibre of his frame; large drops of chilling damps fell from his brow; he called in fearful and loud accents repeatedly upon the name of De Clisson, at one moment bidding the knight who slept in the adjoining room attend him, and at the next dismissing him with angry words. The morning came — when the esquire to whose charge he had entrusted the murder, hastily entered the chamber of the count, and found him in a half-frantic state, from agony and remorse. "Is De Clisson dead?" ejaculated the Duke, in a voice that feared even to trust its own sounds? "He is," replied the man. The eyes of De Montfort glared with terror upon him; and, hastily starting up, he seized him by the arm, and giving

way to the mingled transports of fury and remorse, exclaimed, "This, — this is a pitiful good-morrow. Would I had had Laval, but honest men about me: henceforth all peace to me is gone; and, for you, the base tool of a madman's passion, the wretched instrument of a murderer's fury, quit my castle, and never let me see your face again." "Not so, my Lord," replied the esquire; "calm the terrors of your remorse, for I can provide the remedy." "There is none for death," said De Montfort, mournfully. "But De Clisson is living," rejoined the dependant; "the order for his death, given by you in anger is not yet executed, and the Lord de Laval waits without to speak with you." Laval seized the moment when De Montfort, relieved from the horror of a supposed crime, was most likely to hear favourably an offer of accommodation. And he procured the liberty, both of Beaumanoir and De Clisson, on the payment of a large ransom. Some time after Sir Oliver complained to the King of France, of this unjust and compelled surrender of his property, and by many losses and misfortunes ensuing from it, De Montfort was severely punished for his base and treacherous design.

LETTER XXVI.

Vannes.

We purposed, my dear ——, quitting Vannes this day; but some little trouble about our passport delayed the time, and we determined to remain here till to-morrow. You have, I believe, frequently heard of the particularity of the French in regard to passports; but you can have no idea what an annoyance they are to persons who travel in the remote parts of France, where they are a thousand times more troublesome than upon the high roads near Paris, &c. The French cannot go thirty miles without the government thus giving them a sanction, which, if they chance to lose, they are left at the mercy of a *gendarme*; and the military power thus exercising the civil functions, is frequently extremely insolent in the display of its authority. A droll instance of this kind occurred to an English gentleman, who related the circumstance to us. When you are travelling in the night, perhaps half-asleep, and in total darkness, a *gendarme* presents himself at the carriage window, and demands the passports of the travellers within: they are examined and returned. So it happened to this gentleman; he took back his passport, put it in his pocket, and composed himself again to sleep. During the night some of his fellow-passengers stopt on the road, and the next morning upon entering a town, he was again desired to produce his passport; he handed it to the *gendarme*, who had no sooner examined its contents, than

he insisted that the gentleman should not be suffered to proceed on his journey, till he could give an account of himself to the police, and receive advices from Paris in what manner the government chose to dispose of him. Upon enquiry into the meaning of all this, the astonished traveller found, that during the night, a mistake had occurred in returning the passports, and that he had received one that described the person, and belonged to an old woman whom they had left upon the road. In consequence of this, he was detained, and the Englishman feared the most serious consequences; but having been formerly a prisoner in France, nearly eleven years, he so perfectly understood the language, and the manner of procedure in such an affair, that he very soon regained his liberty.

I have now been so long a wanderer in France, that you will expect me to say something in regard to my opinion of the generality of the people; but, perhaps, I am not entirely unprejudiced, being too thoroughly English to feel much charmed with the dazzling tinsel exterior of mere French politeness. The ladies of this country generally form a very terrible idea of the restraint which they suppose is forced upon English women; they consider it a most dull and ridiculous thing that we never frequent public places with some select male friend; and I have been told a thousand times, that the English husbands are the most jealous monsters in the world. What a pity it is that we were not born in this happy land, where liberty flourishes like weeds, that choak up flowers and all.

I once travelled with a very pretty Frenchwoman, and one of these kind and attentive friends, when I was stupid enough to mistake the gentleman for Madame's husband; the lady, in order to set me right, and at the same time excite my envy for

the superiorly happy state of wedded freedom in her country, assured me he was no such thing, and, added she, with a half-compassionate air, "You must not judge the customs of France by those of England; we enjoy a more liberal intercourse of friendship; the graces of a lady belong as much to her husband's friends as they do to the husband himself, and no restraint is laid upon her pleasures. For my own part, I often travel with my friend, *pour passer le tems.*" She then turned to the gentleman, who was the complaisant echo to all she said; and making use of him, as certain stage heroines do of their confidants, namely, to tell them all they know, that the audience may be made acquainted with it. "I assure you, Monsieur," said the lady, "the English women are the greatest slaves in the world: before they marry, they are shut up *en pension*, and afterwards they are obliged to nurse their children; and if they dared but take the little diversion of going to the theatre, or travelling as I do with you, their husbands would turn them out of doors for such a trifle; *quelle tyrannie!*" The friend assented to all this, and opened an attack upon our barbarous taste in the art of cookery, assuring the lady we were even absurd enough to wash and flour poultry before it was dressed. This seemed a mighty want of common sense; for he finished the remark with a most significant shrug, and exclaimed, *ce drole pays la.*

The French ladies with all their boasted liberty, are in my opinion, generally unhappy wives; for the husband who so complaisantly admits the attendance of a gallant, has seldom much affection, and still less respect for his wife. Monsieur le Marie pays the most flattering attention to the whole sex, and treats the partner of his fortunes with a carelessness, or want of

common good-breeding, that is even harsh in its expression. This is truly French, and may be traced to its original source in a want of real delicacy; a Frenchman, with all his politeness, is naturally coarse, and the indulgence in a perpetual want of decorum under his own roof, begets a familiarity that ultimately sinks into the most vulgar excesses of brutal habits. What conduct can such a man expect from his wife, whose manners and morals his own example has helped to corrupt? yet, he forsooth talks of honour, *l'honneur d' un Français.*

Although it is undoubtedly true, that amongst the French we sometimes meet with persons who are equally polite, courteous, and well-bred, yet what will you say to me, when I tell you, that according to my notion of things, the French people in *general* are not really and virtually so polite as the English. All our modern beaux and young ladies, who are charmed with *la mode de Paris*, would rise in arms against me for saying this; but I would ask them in what real politeness consists? If paying you compliments so extravagant, that you doubt if they are not intended to ridicule you, be polite, then are the French truly so: if being charmed with all you do say, and all you do not say, constitutes the art, the French possess it to the very last degree. But politeness seems to me nothing more than the habit of a benevolent and polished mind, that seeks to oblige, but never to wound your feelings, or humble your self-esteem: can the French be said to possess this, when they will personally offer you every attention, and at the same time abuse your country, your customs, and your government, with the most unceremonious freedom before your face; and although they are aware of the greater reserve that characterises the manners of your nation, they will frequently

utter such coarse things before an Englishwoman, that her delicacy is pained by hearing them.

A Frenchman's whole life is apparently a great *jeu de théâtre*. He seems always to be acting something he does not feel: he will grimace the finest affections of the human heart, till the whole intercourse of society becomes like a dramatic scene, where they play so long the same piece, that the farce is so completely understood, you no longer give in to the illusion. Not the aged heroine, who comes forth on some stage where she has exhibited for the last forty years, made up with every aid of paint, gaudiness, and show, to affect the youth she no longer retains;—not even is she a combination of more deception than the well-painted artifice of the French character. A Frenchman is a being of sentiment: sentiment is his theme, his glory. *Elevation de l'ame*, — *les affections du cœur*, — are phrases that he mingles even with the most common subjects of discourse. Art seems perpetually at war with Nature, till she is fairly driven out of the field; or, if you now and then chance to meet her, poor Nature is so disguised, that 'tis ten to one if you find her out.

A Frenchman's mode of speech is like his character, accommodating upon all occasions, and carries with it a most extraordinary latitude. Monsieur is *au desespoir* if you are dying, he is equally *au desespoir* if he treads upon your toes; Madame is *affectionnée* towards yourself, and *affectionnée* towards her monkey, and, in like manner, the most extravagant phrases are used upon subjects of no meaning or sincerity.

You will be surprised at hearing, that amongst the inferior orders, the men in this country perform offices the *meanest* would not stoop to in England; for, even in Paris, where the

people are more polished, they make the beds, and attend the rooms, just like our house-maids. In travelling, I have sometimes lodged at large hotels, where there has not been a female belonging to the house, and the waiter has frequently asked me, in the most civil terms, if he should help me dress before the hour of dinner, with an assurance that he was accustomed to such an office. At several of the best hotels in Paris, your bed-chamber is the apartment, in which you sit or receive your friends; and if you happen to leave your door unlocked, your room stands a chance of being entered by one of these gentlemen-house-maids, without the least given warning. In the same manner, a porter or postillion will come into your chamber for luggage, &c. *sans ceremonie*. Such things are trifling; but when taken in the aggregate, they certainly show a prevailing want of decorum in the people.

And I must here relate to you a ludicrous circumstance of a similar nature that occurred to me but this morning, before I was up. I was suddenly awakened by some person opening my door, and telling me in most courteous terms, they were come to dress my wig: — "My wig!" said I, half asleep, and looking through the curtains; "I have no wig to dress." When I perceived a French barber, loaded with all the implements of his trade, who stood bowing before me, down to the very ground. I could scarcely forbear laughing aloud, his powdered hair, like a *chevaux-de-frise*, covered by a fall of snow, stood erect above a countenance, that looked as if he lived upon his own soap. He carried in one hand Mambrino's helmet, and in the other a painted wig-block, more hideous than his own visage. I begged him immediately to retire; but Monsieur l'Artiste des Perruques would by no means betray the complaisance of his country, or precipitately retreat, without

apologizing for his intrusion. He shrugged up his shoulders, and declared he was *au descspoir*, for having disturbed me, which arose from his mistake, as he was engaged to *faire la tete d'un Monsieur*, in the next room. So saying, he made his exit, with at least half-a-dozen more bows. When I mentioned this occurrence to a French lady here, she thought nothing at all of it, but told me her valet often dressed her hair whilst she was in bed!

LETTER XXVII.

My dear ——, Nantes.

We have had a most unpleasant and fatiguing journey to Nantes. The day after I last wrote we quitted Vannes, at nine o'clock in the evening, and at three in the morning arrived at La Roche Bernard, where we were obliged to alight, in order to cross the ferry. The darkness was so great, we could not distinguish any object, and the dense fog, in which we were enveloped, wet us through like rain. Above an hour and a half elapsed, before the horses and carriage could be got out of the boat; during that time we remained in total darkness, nearly perished with cold, upon the banks of the river. At length we continued our journey, and at five in the afternoon, got safe to the very large and beautiful city of Nantes. A scene entirely new then presented itself. We had left far behind us the dirty towns of Bretagne, and were once more in an extensive, populous, and busy city.

The modern part of Nantes is an elegant town; the streets are broad, clean, and well built; the ancient walls remain in some parts entirely perfect; and a noble feudal castle, surrounded by a deep ditch, presents a most striking and picturesque embellishment to the grandeur of the place. We have seen both the college, the public library, and cathedral. The latter has severely suffered during the Revolution, all the fine painted glass having been destroyed at that time. The most interesting object in the cathedral is the superb monument of Francois, Duke of Britanny, and his wife. It consists of two re-

cumbent figures, representing the Duke and Duchess, cut in white marble, of most exquisite sculpture. At each corner of the tomb appear, standing in an erect position, the figures of Justice, Temperance, Fortitude, and Prudence, they are of the natural size, and so finely executed, that you may contemplate them, till you almost fancy they were about to move. A lion, and a grey hound lie at the feet of the Duke and Duchess. At the head, and around the monument on which the effigies recline, are carved the figures of St. Louis, and Charlemagne, and the twelve apostles. Beneath are several monks represented in black and white marble. On a brass plate inserted at the head of the tomb this inscription appears:

" Tombeau de Francois Deux, dernier Duc de Bretagne, mort " à Çoveron le neuf Septembre 1488; de Marguerite de Bretagne " sa premier Femme, et de Marguerite de Foix sa seconde " Femme. Les restes d'Arthur troisime Duc de Bretagne, " Comte de Richemont Connétable de France, mort a Nantes le " 26 Decembre 1458; y ont été déposes le 28 Aout 1817."

This beautiful monument was executed by an artist named Michel Colombe, according to the directions of the Duchess Anne de Bretagne. It was doomed for destruction at the Revolution; but some monks succeeded in taking it to pieces; and, the better to conceal it from the savages, who made war with every relic of the liberal arts, they buried this tomb, with all the figures, under ground, whence it was removed and again erected in 1817. Mr. S—— considers it a much finer monument of the middle ages than any we have in England, and the most beautiful he has ever seen.

The exchange at Nantes is a fine building. Upon the elevation of the façade stand several figures, the appropriate emblems of a commercial city. We are most agreeably lodged at the hotel

de France, — an inn by no means inferior to the York House, at Bath: it stands in a large square of very handsome houses. From our window we have a view of the theatre, a beautiful stone building; the portico is ascended by a flight of steps, and supported by eight columns of the Corinthian order. There are many curious and ancient dwellings in Nantes; but the streets are formed, in general, of lofty and handsome stone-built houses. The proportions of the cathedral are extremely noble, and the door-ways of the richest Gothic architecture. It is much to be regretted that it has sustained so many injuries during the Revolution; (and I may also observe, the building was never originally finished) but at that period, no church or convent escaped in Nantes: several were left in absolute ruins, and the most sanguinary spirit was exhibited in all the proceedings of the Revolutionists. The tomb and effigy of John De Montfort, who so long contested his title to the duchy with Charles De Blois, was formerly in the cathedral, but it also shared the general destruction. In the Museum here, which, though small, has a very elegant collection of interesting objects, chiefly of natural history, I could not view, without feelings of horror, the dried skin of a wretched German, suspended upon the walls: he was a Royalist, who behaved gallantly in support of the unfortunate Bourbons, but falling at last into the enemy's power, he was *skinned, while yet alive.* In memory of their own cruelty, the people of Nantes now display the dried and extended skin upon the walls of their Museum. There was not indeed, throughout all France, a more revolutionary or sanguinary set of people than the citizens of Nantes: to this day, a remnant of their former spirit still exists, evidently betrayed by their conversation and remarks, on deeds long since acted. An elderly woman, who holds an office in the cathedral,

was relating to us some of the cruel barbarities that disgraced that period; and she finished her narration, with observing, that "all these things were done to produce an essential good in the "end; desperate means being the best way to accomplish such "a purpose."

The ancient monasteries of the Carmelites and the Chartreuse were entirely destroyed; the former so completely, that houses are now built upon its scite. The latter was one of the richest convents in France, and possessed many valuable pictures, treasures, and a rare library of manuscripts and books, all burnt, and pillaged by the revolutionists. So great was the sanctity of the monks of the Chartreuse, that after the Duchess Anne of Bretagne had paid a visit to their convent, they carefully unpaved every part of the building through which she had passed, believing that the very sanctity of their stones, had been polluted by the footstep of a woman. The Duchess, extremely offended, returned the compliment by muleting them of half their money, and lands. The polluted stones, were again restored to their place, in order to appease the wrath of the Duchess; but not so the fines, which she still retained as possessions of the crown.

Near the ruins of the Chartreuse, two little painted images have lately been erected, each placed within the trunk of a tree, in memory of a remarkable miracle having been there accomplished, many hundred years since. Two holy persons (whose names I have forgotten) were pursued by an enemy to the Christian faith, who sought their lives. The saints, unluckily, not being very expert in the use of their legs, could manage to run no farther than two oak trees, where they were obliged to halt; and praying to the Virgin for immediate assistance, the trees most opportunely separated in the middle of their trunks, and shut up the holy men, while their enemy passed by.

Pleased as I am with the beautiful buildings, and the fine city of Nantes, I cannot look upon the people without a feeling of abhorrence, when I remember the deeds of wickedness and blood, that have been acted within their walls, by the fathers (and many still existing) of the present inhabitants. Whilst I admired the castle, I shuddered at the recollection of those sufferings, you have so often repeated to me, of our unhappy * relative, who fell a sacrifice during the Revolution, and miserably perished in a gloomy dungeon, within the castle of Nantes.

Mr. S —— wished to ascertain if any of the monumental relics, that once so splendidly adorned the chapel of the Chartreuse, yet existed amidst the scattered and desolated ruins of the convent; and we walked towards the few remaining cells, (now inhabited by poor people,) for the purpose of making some enquiries. Accordingly, we knocked at the little door of a cell, when a voice within, demanded what we wanted. Upon stating our purpose, the voice again demanded—"Who are you?" "Strangers."—"What strangers?" "Friends." The door was then cautiously and slowly opened by a tall person, dressed in mean apparel. He appeared to be a man advanced in life; his complexion was of a pallid and sallow hue; his brows seemed contracted by a habitual frown; and his grey hairs hung in disorder about a head and face, that nature had formed handsome, but to which penury had given an expression of melancholy and want. This poor man surveyed us with a penetrating look, and, bidding us welcome with an address,

* This excellent man, Mr. Gibbons, held the office of Chief Justice of Cape Breton; his freedom was offered to him if he would declare himself by birth an American, but disdaining to deny his country or save his life by falsehood, he persisted in avowing he was an *Englishman*. In consequence of this he was thrown into prison, where he experienced every want, cruelty, and hardship, and at length died a lingering and painful death, occasioned by the most unmerited sufferings.

equally courteous and elegant, requested we would walk in. As soon as we entered, he made fast the door, and led the way in silence to a little apartment, where, with a manner possessing peculiar dignity, but such as I cannot describe, he again bade us welcome, and requested we would sit down. "You are welcome," said he, "to the dwelling of misfortune;—but you seem fatigued:"—and immediately this singular man left us to procure some wine for our refreshment. During his short absence we had leisure to observe the cell. Every thing bespoke want and poverty. A slight partition divided it into two rooms. In one of these a wretched bed was placed on the ground. A few books and papers were scattered upon the table in the other apartment; and round the walls hung several portraits, representing persons attired in rich habits. Amongst them I noticed the picture of a very handsome woman; and in the fine features of another I fancied I could trace some resemblance to the present inhabitant of the cell.

He soon returned with the wine, and entered into easy and familiar conversation. When he understood we were English travellers, he expressed himself happy in the meeting, and turning the discourse upon national topics, he passed the highest eulogium on the English character, and seemed perfectly well acquainted with our government, laws, and the recent events of our country. At length the French Revolution became the subject of remark, when he spoke of the horrors of that time in words so forcible and energetic, yet so incoherent and wild, that we soon perceived he had a slight alienation of mind. He uttered such loud exclamations, that I believe he observed I looked astonished at his vehemence; for he turned to me and said, in a gentle manner, "I would not alarm a lady who honours with her

presence my poor cell. For many years, you are the only persons of my own degree with whom I have conversed beneath these miserable walls. It was not so once." — A tear started into the eyes of the unhappy man; and I endeavoured to change the discourse, by speaking of the country, &c. but he soon returned to the old theme, and execrated the conduct of the French in bitter terms. With a contemptuous pride, he compared their changes of government to the wind that blows, — first in one direction and then in another, and expressed himself ashamed of the nation to which he owed his birth. The unfortunate Revolution was again mentioned, and again we remarked the same alienation of mind. This was the chord that vibrated to the remembrance of his misfortunes. He could not bear its touch.

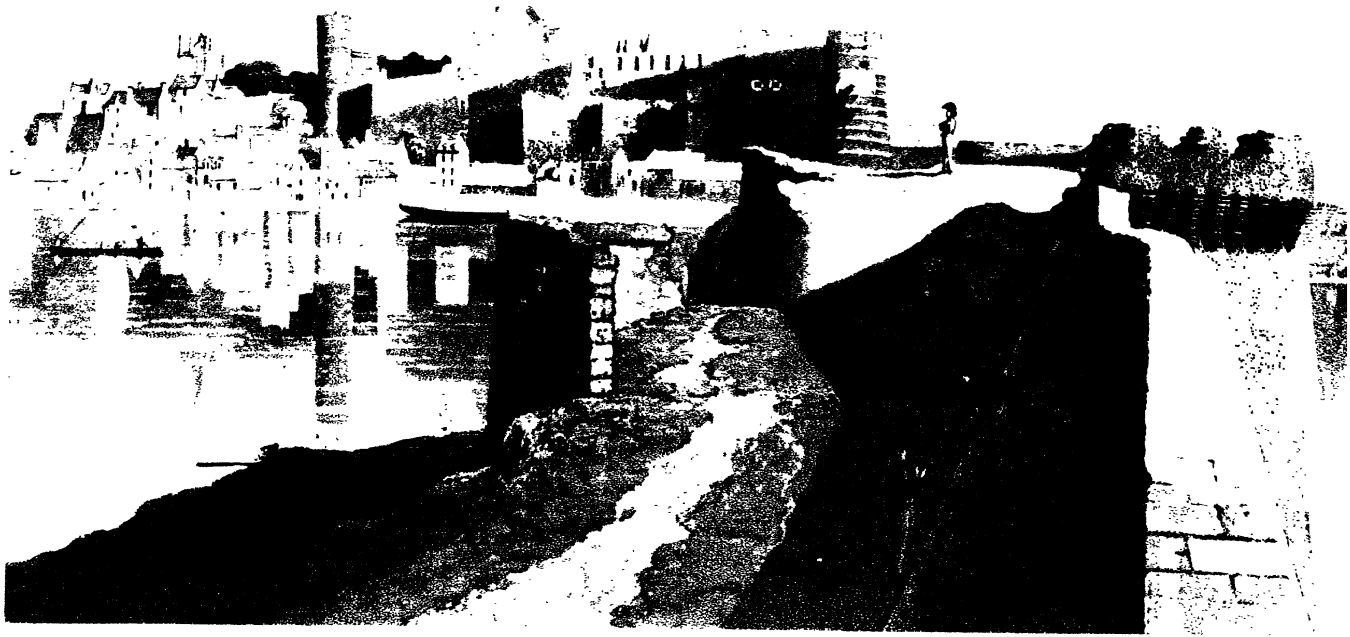
After a wild harangue on the injustice and misery of mankind, he became more consistent; and assuming a firm manner, he pointed to the pictures, begging I would attentively observe them. "That charming countenance, Madam," said he, "is the portrait of my once beloved wife. Blessed be God, who has taken her to himself, she does not share my sufferings. — That boy was my son, my lost, unhappy son, murdered by Robespierre. — This was my daughter, brought by misery to an untimely grave. — And that, Madam, was once the likeness of the wretched being before you. Can you trace, in the worn features of an old and broken man, any resemblance to the canvass there? Hear me, and wonder not that I curse the country where I was born, — the country I have served, and that has repaid me with ruin, the ruin of all my hopes and fortunes. My name is Hubert ——. I am of a noble family of the old Regimé. My rank in the army was that of General, under the unfortunate Louis the

Sixteenth. I was sincerely attached to the House of Bourbon, till I could no longer serve them, and then I fled to preserve my life. Tyranny and bloodshed usurped right and justice. I was pursued, but escaped my enemies. In the interim, my unhappy son became the victim: he was sacrificed to satiate a vengeance that could not reach me. My brother, who was rich, did not exercise any public function. He had adopted my younger child. When I fled, my wife and daughter were left in his charge. My wife died, overwhelmed by grief for the murder of her son, and anxiety for me. My daughter, whose health was delicate, soon filled another grave. All my property had been seized during the Revolution. For several years I remained concealed in exile; nor did I venture my return into France till affairs were at least in a tranquil state. When I once more visited my own country, I learned, for the first time, the full extent of my misfortunes, and that I was alone in the world, without wife, children, brother, friends, or support. I had lost all. My brother, before his decease, had left the greater part of his property to me, and I then claimed the inheritance; but his widow had married again, — married a worthless and revolutionary partisan, and he kept possession of the property that was justly mine. The powerful generally bear down the weak. I commenced a law-suit; but want of money, and the wealth and interest of my opponent, soon obliged me to abandon my suit. And that man enjoys, in Nantes, to this hour, the means that would have rescued me from want. Should you, in this town, meet with Monsieur and Madame ——, say to them that you have seen Hubert ——."

The unfortunate man ended the recital of his calamities, in pronouncing these last words with such fearful energy, that I

apprehended the return of his temporary mental alienation; but he seemed perfectly calm, and even cheerful, the next moment. He then begged us to follow him into another cell, which he called his library. We there found bundles of glass beads, toys, and large knives, and he told us these trifles procured him support, by exporting them to Africa, and obtaining small portions of gold-dust from the captains of trading vessels in exchange.

We remained nearly two hours with this extraordinary man, and left him with feelings of pity and respect. He shook us kindly by the hand, with an assurance that we should again be welcome to the cell of Hubert ——.



LETTER XXVIII.

Angers.

We are now, my dear ——, in Angers, — the charming and romantic town of Angers. My time has been so occupied in viewing the many interesting objects with which it abounds, that I have not, till this evening, found leisure for continuing the account of our excursion.

After leaving Nantes, we travelled along the banks of the Loire, amidst scenery of rich and variegated verdure, and passed through the picturesque town of Oudon, where still remain the ruins of its feudal castle. But how shall I describe Angers, the scene of ancient story, delightful from the combination it presents of natural and beautiful objects, united with those majestic remains of former grandeur that characterise the buildings of Gothic times! Angers is situated on the banks of the Mayenne, into which the Loire and the Sarte pour their united waters. The castle, a stupendous and noble structure, stands aloft upon the summit of a perpendicular rocky precipice, whose base is laved by the clear and silent waters of the Mayenne. The walls of the castle are of great height and thickness; they are flanked by eighteen massive circular towers. Towards the town it is defended by a deep moat, over which two drawbridges lead to the Gothic and machicolated portals. The palace and chapel that stand within the castle, were built by René, King of Sicily, and are of a much later date than the other parts of the building.

A Gothic bridge that crossed the Mayenne, and once communicated with some strong fortifications on the opposite shore, now exhibits only a few picturesque and broken arches, that reflect their decaying fragments in the transparent flood beneath. The very extensive and ancient walls of the town, built of a dark-brown stone, appear still formidable, although partly in ruins; they are flanked by projecting circular, or here and there square towers, surmounted by a machicolated work, The high spires of the cathedral of St. Maurice, (which stands on an eminence in the centre of the town,) appear from their lofty site, when viewed at a distance, as if suspended in air.

Angers abounds in curious Gothic houses: several have light, elegant, carved stone galleries before the windows in front, which give a most picturesque character to the town. The vine, that grows in full luxuriance in this delightful province, is frequently seen twining around the Gothic mouldings of these venerable structures, and sometimes runs across the streets from house to house. The market displays the varied produce of the country; the grape, the pomegranate, the gourd, the pear, and the quince, rich with their ripe autumnal luxury, lie in abundant heaps, piled in ozier baskets, exposed for sale by the sun-burnt peasantry, who seem inspired with gaiety by the warm and unclouded atmosphere that shines upon them.

Busy groups of females throng about the margin of the river, and beguile their time with singing, while they beat their clothes with wooden spatulæ in the water.

Before the Revolution, there were twenty-seven convents in Angers; but few now exist, and those lie for the greater part in mouldering ruins. Of the fine monastery of St. Aubin, now alone remain the towers, and those broken and dilapidated

columns and arches, whose Gothic capitals and ornaments convey to the observer a splendid idea of their former magnificence. The convent of the Trinity, and several other religious edifices appear in the same state. A church, remarkable for its curious and very ancient architecture, is to this day in the ruined condition in which it was left by King John of England, who burnt it, at the time he committed such ravages in Angers. The hospital of St. John, said to have been erected by our Henry II., is happily still uninjured. The interior very extensive hall, where the sick are lodged, is a most magnificent Gothic chamber, beautiful from its extreme width and height, and the double row of light elegant columns that support the roof.

The cathedral of St. Maurice is indeed a fine edifice; it stands on a very lofty site, which displays to the greatest advantage a pile so interesting. The principal door-way is filled with rich carvings of Gothic device, around the entrance are placed several ancient figures of saints, in the costume of the 11th century. The architecture of the interior exhibits the most exquisite work: the fine painted glass and tapestry of great antiquity, wrought at the commencement of the 15th century, by some happy chance escaped the general wreck, and still remain uninjured. Margaret of Anjou, the queen of Henry the Sixth of England, and daughter to René, king of Sicily, was buried in the same tomb with her father; this tomb was destroyed, with many other interesting things, during the Revolution.

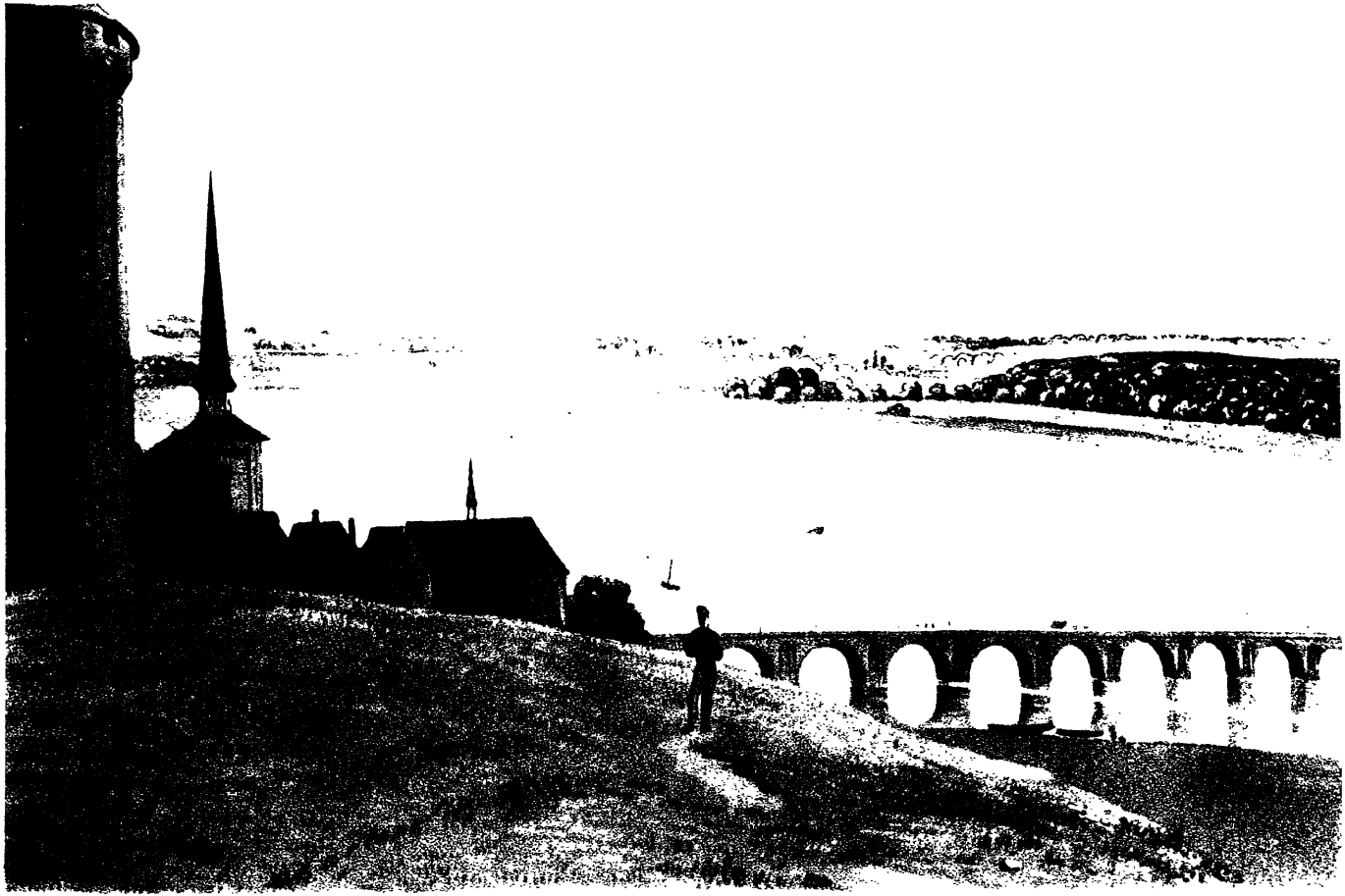
In Angers there is so much to gratify the lover of picturesque objects, that every walk presents some new source of pleasure and enquiry. The fine river, the broken bridges, the castle, the Gothic pinnacles, and the ancient houses, afford subjects such as the painter would select for delineation. You are too well acquainted

with the historical events that have given a peculiar interest to this city, to need my remarking them here. I shall therefore only observe, that tradition says, when the young Prince Arthur, son of the Lady Constance, fled to Angers for protection, he was lodged in the strong castle upon the rock.

This town claims an additional interest from its being the scene of action in some part of Shakspeare's "History of King John." Angers was a city of considerable importance in the time of the Romans. We were this morning walking near the principal entrance to the castle, when we observed workmen excavating the ground, for the purpose of making some foundation; they had just discovered, buried about twelve feet beneath the surface of the earth, a Roman altar, with an inscription upon it. Several fragments of Roman pottery, and a gold coin of St. Louis, were also found during the time we staid to watch their progress.

The climate in this province, although the year is now far advanced, is still delightful, and even warm. The days we have passed here have been those of continued sunshine, with scarcely a wandering cloud floating through the heavens. The buildings in Angers, from their open galleries and deep-projecting roofs, appear calculated to afford coolness or shelter in a warm climate.

Excuse so brief a letter; necessity obliges me to conclude, as we continue our journey to-morrow; and, although it is late, I have yet to pack up and prepare for our departure, before I retire to rest. Adieu.



LETTER XXIX.

MY DEAR ———, Saumur.

WE have been extremely delighted with our excursion along the beautiful banks of the Loire, from Angers to Saumur. During the journey, we rested the horses at St. Maturin, and amused ourselves the while with viewing the little Gothic church that decorates that village, — well deserving the attention of the traveller for its interior picturesque combinations. We arrived in the evening at Saumur, a town most delightfully situated on the Loire. The banks of the river adjacent to the city are skirted by high rocks, in which are numerous excavated dwellings for the poor; these are accessible by steps cut also in the rock. The vine hanging in beautiful and luxuriant festoons about these little habitations, together with their romantic appearance, forms a combination of objects peculiarly striking and picturesque. The castle of Saumur (where a garrison is established) stands upon a high rock, on the banks of the river. This edifice is still perfect, and very beautiful in its construction. It was built in the twelfth century, by Geoffrey Martel, and finished in the reign of Louis the Ninth. The church of St. Pierre, an ancient and interesting building, contains the curious tapestry, representing the adventures of St. Florent. This work was executed in the fifteenth century; it is long and narrow, like the tapestry of Bayeux. Florent and Florian were brothers and soldiers, who professed Christianity, and who hearing that several persons of the same faith were about suffering martyrdom at Lauriach,

they resolved to hasten to them, in the hope of affording consolation to their distress. The brothers were seized during their journey, and condemned to death. These unfortunate prisoners being tied to a tree, a deep sleep overcame them and their guard, when an angel appearing in a dream to St. Florent, he was directed to pass into Gaul, and, as soon as he awoke, found himself at liberty to depart. Amongst his miraculous adventures during the journey, it is recorded a boat carried him over the Rhone, without having a bottom to it, or any sails or oars. Upon arriving at a cave, near Mount Glonne, he found it filled by serpents, which he drove out with his prayers, and then established himself in their former residence. Some time after he chanced to meet an old blind woman, whose son had been drowned three days before. St. Florent bade her not despair, and immediately setting several strong fellows to work with their nets, they fished up the young man alive and well. The saint sent the youth to his mother, whose eyes were immediately opened: no wonder; for surely the very hearing of such a miracle, would open the eyes of any one. This succession of Catholic wonders is worked upon the tapestry, and devoutly gazed at by the old women and little children, who burn their candle-ends in homage to the saint.

We are now in the neighbourhood of Chinon, and the celebrated Abbey of Fontevraud, which has always been considered one of the finest religious edifices in France, and so extensive, that, viewed at a distance, it appears like a little town of Gothic construction, embosomed in the midst of fine woods. The order that was first founded at Fontevraud existed there from the eleventh century, till the year 1793, when it was subverted by the Revolutionists, who drove the inhabitants from their sanctuary, and both pillaged and dilapidated the convent. During that period, several

of the beautiful Gothic edifices were entirely demolished, and others left in a ruined condition.

As Fontevraud was chosen for the burial-place of a few of our early kings, till they lost the provinces of Anjou and Maine, in the time of King John, some mention of the first foundation of the monastery, which will account for the vast extent of the building, must be interesting to you here. This celebrated abbey, where all the supreme power was invested in the person of a female, who was alike abbess both of the monks and nuns, was founded, towards the end of the eleventh century, by Robert D'Arbrissel, a Breton priest, and so famous a preacher in his time, that Pope Urban the Second commanded him, wherever he went, to harangue the people in favour of the first crusade. So successful proved the eloquence of Robert, that many persons, from simply hearing his orations, left their families and hastened into Palestine, where they fought under the holy banners of Godfrey de Bouillon; — others, who either wanted opportunity or resolution to venture the personal hazard of fighting with the infidels, inspired with zeal by the eloquence of the priest, contributed a large portion of their substance in support of the sacred war.

Robert likewise wandered about the country, preaching, wherever he came, a contempt of this world, and the merit of abandoning all earthly things, in order to devote both body and soul to the temporal and eternal service of God. So forcibly did his arguments and vehement orations convince the multitudes who listened to him, that many hundreds became his followers and disciples: wives abandoned their husbands, and husbands their wives; children left their parents, and parents quitted their homes, as the devoted converts of the holy wanderer. Men

and women, both of bad as well as good repute, composed his retinue, which became at length so numerous that it was unmanageable. Robert, therefore, determined to choose some spot where he might form his multitude into a regular order. The wild forest of Fontevraud, watered by a pure fountain that issued from a rock, was selected as a convenient retreat for these infatuated people. The little colony at first built themselves huts with the branches of trees and heaps of turf, as a shelter from the weather, or during the night. Their exertions to render the forest habitable were soon assisted by the people of the neighbouring country, who eagerly afforded both sustenance and aid to the holy man and his train. A lady named Aramburge gave them the valley in which the great church was afterwards erected; the lords of Montreuil and Radegonde, the lands of Born and the forest of Fontevraud. Kings, princes, and nobles poured in their wealth to assist in the pious act of building these monasteries. After a considerable time necessarily occupied in such numerous erections, the multitude were formed into some degree of order. Three hundred nuns, selected from the most reputable and best educated females, were placed in the convent near the great church, which in size and splendour resembled a cathedral. The others were divided into companies, each including one hundred women. Those who had formerly led abandoned lives were placed in the convent dedicated to St. Madeleine, and called *femmes repenties*. The sick and leprous were lodged in the hospital of St. Lazare. The order of monks who were devoted to St. John inhabited a monastery dedicated to their saint. But of this building the ruins of the church now alone remain. The erection of the nave of the great church is attributed to Foulques, fifth Count of Anjou,

about the year 1125, and many other parts of the abbey were built at that period.

Robert, the founder of this numerous order, lived to see it extended throughout the greater part of France. Towards the end of his career, he gave up the authority as superior, and invested it in the person of a beautiful lady named Petronille de Chemille, electing her Abbess of Fontevraud, and submitted both himself and all the convents to her supremacy. He died A. D. 1117, and was interred near the altar of the great church. His effigy, of white marble, was afterwards removed beneath a monument dedicated to his memory, by Louise de Bourbon, Abbess of Fontevraud in the year 1623. The modern tomb yet remains; but whether the Revolutionists destroyed the effigy or not when they pillaged the monastery is uncertain: it no longer exists. After the death of Robert, the Pope refused him canonization, in consideration of the doubtful penance to which he frequently devoted himself previous to his dissolution; for it was the holy man's custom, to show how far spiritual contemplations had overcome all worldly feelings, to pass some hours of the night with two of the youngest and most beautiful nuns, who were enjoined to sleep, while the saint prayed by their side.

It is remarkable that the costume of these monks and nuns never altered from the time of their first establishment, in the eleventh century, to that of their abolition in 1793. They were clothed by order of Robert D'Arbrissel, according to the prevailing dress of the time: the men wore black, covered by a long mantle, to which a cowl was attached; and, at the bottom of the garment, both in front and behind, appeared a small square piece of cloth, which bore the name of *the Robert:* the nuns were attired in a white petticoat, of fine linen, with lawn sleeves nicely plaited;

a black stomacher and belt completed the gown; the head was covered with a light black veil, and the feet by white stockings, and shoes; the extreme neatness of this costume received considerable embellishment from the full folds of the long and elegant black mantle that they wore during divine service. After the decease of Robert, the superiors of the order were generally chosen from women of the first rank; fourteen princesses are numbered amongst the Abbesses of Fontevraud; many of these ladies richly endowed the monastery with lands, money, pictures, jewels, statues, treasures, and additional buildings. Gabrielle de Rochechouart Mortemar, celebrated for her profound knowledge of the Latin and Greek tongues, and for her extraordinary endowments both natural and acquired, was also a distinguished Abbess and patron of Fontevraud. It is much to be regretted that the Revolution has spared little else than the walls of this once magnificent retreat.

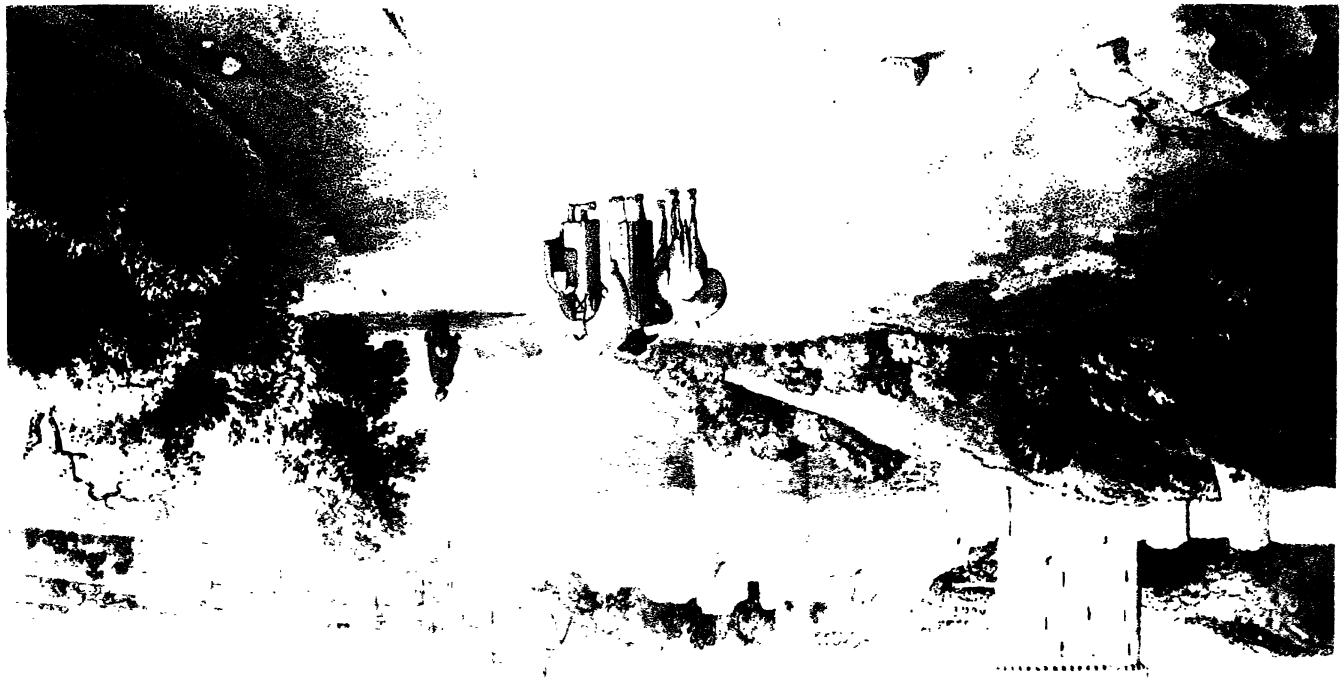
When Mr. S—— first visited France during the summer of 1816, he came direct to Fontevraud, to ascertain if the royal effigies of our early kings, who were buried there, yet existed: subjects so interesting to English history were worthy of the enquiry. He found the abbey converted into a prison, and discovered in a cellar belonging to it, the effigies of Henry the Second and his queen Eleanor of Guienne, Richard the First, and Isabella of Angouleme, the queen of John. The chapel, where the figures were placed before the Revolution, had been entirely destroyed; and these valuable effigies, then removed to the cellar, were subject to continual mutilation from the prisoners, who came twice in every day to draw water from a well. It appeared they had sustained some recent injury, as Mr. S—— found several broken fragments scattered around. He made drawings of the figures; and, upon his

return to England, represented to our government the propriety of securing such interesting memorials from farther destruction. It was deemed advisable, if such a plan could be accomplished, to gain possession of them, that they might be placed, with the rest of our royal effigies, in Westminster-Abbey. The English government failed in this, from the affair having passed through too political a channel. It is probable, that had an application been made in the first instance by the Prince Regent to Louis the Eighteenth, it would have proved successful; but it is fortunate that the application was made even in this manner, as it has served the purpose of securing these remains from total destruction.

Henry the Second, of England, loved the banks of the Loire, and frequently passed some time in the castle of Saumur: he was resident there when Philippe Auguste, king of France, and Richard Cœur de Lion, besieged the city of Tours, which at that time belonged to Henry. It was during the siege of Tours that the English monarch received from Philippe an offer of terms of accommodation; but these were of such an humiliating nature to Henry, that he deferred subscribing to them, and hesitated what course he should adopt. Some days after, whilst he was holding a conference with the French king, a storm suddenly arose, and darkened all the air; the thunder burst in tremendous peals, and historians relate, that a bolt of electric matter fell from the clouds between the two kings, who were on horseback, without injuring either: the horses took fright, and, with great violence, bore away their riders in different directions, so that with much trouble they again met, when immediately the thunder burst a second time, and with a loud noise discharged another electric bolt, which fell at the feet of the affrighted Henry, who believing this sudden tempest a mark of Divine wrath, his firmness abandoned him, and he subscribed without murmuring to the humiliating terms pro-

posed. Henry retired to Saumur with heart-felt repinings and silent grief for the disasters with which he was overwhelmed. During his retreat, a singular curiosity incited him to gain intelligence of his own noblemen who were leagued against him, by procuring from the French king a list of their names. Philippe, who rejoiced at an opportunity of affording a fresh subject of mortification to the English king, caused a list of the conspirators to be presented to him, and placed at their head the name of John Lackland, Henry's favourite son, to whom he had shown so many marks of parental affection. The unfortunate father, shocked at finding not only Richard, but his favourite son John also, in league against him, retired broken-hearted to Chinon, where, giving himself up to the bitter anguish of a disappointed mind, he fell into a despairing melancholy, which brought on a fever, that soon terminated his existence, at the castle of Chinon, A.D. 1189. Before his decease, with the bitterness of a father's wrath, he cursed his unnatural sons; nor could the intercessions of the bishops and priests who attended him in his last moments, induce the dying monarch to revoke the maledictions he had bestowed on Richard and John. Henry expired at Chinon surrounded by his courtiers, who, soon after his decease, stripped the body, and laid it naked upon a table exposed to public view, till a young page of the late king, shocked at his master's remains becoming a naked spectacle, covered the body with his own gown. Henry the Second was the first English monarch buried at Fontevraud. His tomb was erected in the choir of the great church, according to his desire. His epitaph was as follows: —

Rex Henricus eram, mihi plurima regna subegi,
Multiplicique modo, duxque, comesque fui,
Cui satis ad votum non essent omnia terræ
Climata, terræ modo sufficit octo pedum.



Qui legis hæc, pensa discrimina mortis, et in me
Humanæ speculum conditionis habe
Sufficit huic tumulus cui non suffecerat orbis.

Eleanor of Guienne, daughter of William the Fifth Duke of Normandy, was but sixteen years old when her father died. He had destined her to become the bride of Louis the Seventh, King of France. She was not only young, rich, and noble, but had received from nature the most rare and charming endowments. Her person was tall and elegant. Her countenance exhibited the graceful attractions of regular beauty, united to a mind naturally powerful and greatly improved by education. Such was the charming Eleanor, whose fame soon became the subject of discourse at foreign courts; for admiration followed wherever she appeared. After her marriage with Louis the Seventh, she accompanied him to the Holy Land, where he was prosecuting the war against the Saracens. For he left his government under the care and direction of the Abbé Sujer of St. Denis, and devoted himself to the Holy Cross.

The example of the young and beautiful Eleanor induced many ladies of the court to follow their husbands into Palestine. Poets, musicians, and courtiers accompanied her suite; and so much was the young queen censured for the libertine conduct she both adopted and encouraged, that Louis resolved upon an immediate divorce. To effect this purpose, he returned into France, and there publicly repudiated her, notwithstanding the advice of his council, who endeavoured to procure her pardon. The fortune of the Queen was restored to her by the King. Soon after the divorce, which took place A. D. 1152, Eleanor again wedded with Henry the Second, King of England, who, by this marriage, became prince of a considerable part of France, besides

Touraine, Anjou, Maine, and Normandy, which he before possessed. Eleanor, proud, lofty, and ambitious, was a conspicuous actor in the events of her own time. A desire of government and domination were her prevailing passions, which induced her to enter deeply into the political intrigues of the day. She had the depravity to join with her own children, Richard and John, in their unnatural revolt against their father. Such conduct was calculated to increase the infidelities of Henry, whom she tormented by her incessant jealousies, without feeling for him the affections of a wife. Eleanor but too well merited the imprisonment from which she was released by her son Richard, on the death of her husband, Henry. Some years after the decease of Richard the First, Eleanor retired to the convent of Fontevraud, where she died in March, A. D. 1204, and was buried near her husband and son.

After Richard the First, Cœur de Lion, regained his freedom from the captivity he had suffered under Leopold, Duke of Austria, he visited the Abbey of Fontevraud, and presented to the monastery a piece of the true cross, and many other precious relics he had taken in the Holy Land. He then returned to England, but soon after came again into the countries of Anjou and Poitou, in consequence of having received intelligence that a person residing in Anjou had discovered a rich treasure, consisting of several statues of pure gold, representing (the size of life) an emperor, his wife, and children, seated at a table also of gold. This person presented Richard with some part of the treasure, but the King demanded the whole, in quality and right of the Lord of the country wherein it had been found. The nobleman refused compliance, and fled from the wrath of Richard to take shelter in the Castle of Chaluz, that belonged to the Count of

Limoges. Richard, provoked at the refusal of a subject, advanced immediately towards Chaluz, determined to besiege the castle; and whilst reconnoitering before the walls, received that wound of which he died, A. D. 1199. Before his death he expressed an earnest wish to be interred by the side of his father, Henry; bitterly and deeply lamenting that he had been the guilty cause of that sorrow which had brought the King to an unhappy end, by the cruel rebellion of his children. Richard Cœur de Lion was buried at Fontevraud: his bowels were deposited in the church of Poitiers, and his heart in the cathedral of Rouen. His epitaph was as follows: —

> "Pictavus exta ducis sepelit, tellusque Chalutis,
> Corpus dat claudi sub marmore Fontis-Ebraldi
> Neustria, tuque tegis cor inexpugnabile Regis;
> Sic loca per trina se sparsit tanta ruina,
> Nec fuit hoc funus cui sufficeret locus unus."

After the death of Richard Cœur de Lion, his nephew, Arthur, Duke of Britanny, became heir to his estates; but the title was disputed by John, King of England, who, immediately upon hearing of Richard's death, hastened to Chinon, and there seized the royal treasure. Philippe Auguste, King of France, who had been sensibly affected by the death of Geoffrey, the father of Arthur, declared in favour of that young prince, and passed into Anjou, with a powerful army, to support his cause. Philippe seized Angers, and presenting young Arthur to the assembled nobles and citizens, made the barons of Anjou swear fealty to the Prince as their rightful lord. The Lady Constance, ever active in supporting the claims of her son, soon after took him with her to Mans, where Philippe was stationed; and placing Arthur under the King's protection, he promised to restore her

child the possession of his estates of Touraine, Poitou, and Normandy, as he had already done those of Anjou. Unhappily for Arthur, these fair promises proved abortive, and Philippe soon after abandoned the young Prince's cause. Arthur, deluded by hope, a transient success, and the flattering promises of warm adherents, found himself at once deserted and abandoned by all those he considered his firmest friends, he determined, therefore, to support his own just cause, without seeking cold-hearted or interested allies. Eleanor of Guienne, the mother of John, was at that time in the castle of Mirebeau, and Arthur, persuaded that, should he succeed in making her prisoner, his uncle would be induced to cede to him the contested rights, determined immediately to attack the castle wherein the Queen was lodged; but Eleanor found means to inform John of her danger, who marched instantly to her relief. He arrived at Saumur, and the following evening, towards night-fall, gained Mirebeau, where he found the besiegers sleeping in their camp. John surprised Arthur, and took him prisoner. The monarch afterwards conveyed his unfortunate nephew to the castle of Falaise, where he was strongly guarded.

Some writers relate that, not long after the capture of the young Prince, his uncle, under pretence of taking him from Falaise to Cherbourg, freed him of the irons with which his limbs were bound, and accompanied him in person from the castle. When they arrived at a convenient spot, John ordered his suite to remain behind, and riding on alone with Arthur by his side, till they came near the precipice of a high rock, he suddenly stopt his horse, and grasping a poignard he carried beneath his robe, stabbed the unfortunate young man to the heart. Arthur fell bleeding upon the earth, and vainly implored the mercy of

John, who, dragging him by the arm towards the verge of the declivity, threw him thence headlong into the sea.

It seems impossible to judge if this account of Arthur's death be true or false, from the doubtful obscurity in which the circumstance is involved. Certain it is, John was designated a parricide by the twelve peers of France, and condemned to forfeit his estates in that country. Notwithstanding this, he continued the war in defence of them, took Beaufort, seized Angers by surprise, and rased the fortifications, which he afterwards rebuilt. John died A. D. 1216: his heart was taken to Fontevraud, and placed in a golden cup near the tomb of his father.

At the castle of Chinon, Joan of Arc was first presented to Charles, King of France. She there addressed him boldly in the full confidence of her inspired mission, and demanded men and arms. Her continued importunities at length prevailed, and she was permitted to remain at Chinon. Some persons deemed her mad, and others thought her cunning; but Charles, whatever were his opinions of her power or of her sanity, conceived she might be made, in those times of preternatural belief, an useful instrument in giving courage and assurance to his cause. Accordingly, in the great hall of Chinon, he presented her with a suit of armour and a sword; after which, Joan, seizing her sacred banner (so called from having a representation of the Almighty worked upon it), mounted a beautiful white steed, and heading a chosen body of men, sallied from the gates of Chinon to hasten to the relief of Orleans.

LETTER XXX.

My dear ——, Orleans.

We continued our route through Langeais, but did not remain there a sufficient time to visit the castle: it appears quite perfect from the exterior view.

After travelling through a fine country, we arrived at St. Mars, and stopt the cabriolet, to observe a most curious building in the vicinity. Although we were not near enough to examine it closely, we saw sufficient, by means of a telescope, to excite both our curiosity and conjecture. It is a very high solid edifice of brick, and has every appearance of being a Roman structure. The form is square, and towards the top, richly ornamented with both red and white bricks, or tiles, the use of such a structure seems doubtful, but from its form and extreme height, it would induce the belief, that it had been designed for a beacon.

The approach to Tours is beautifully picturesque, a very fine bridge of fifteen arches crosses the Loire, over which you enter the town, by a handsome street, that runs parallel with it. Tours was formerly one of the most splendid cities in France; but it is not so at the present time. From the earliest print of Tours, executed in the reign of our Charles the Second, it appears then to have been a city, crowded with magnificent spires, and Gothic pinnacles. Far the greater part of the churches have been destroyed since that period.

The cathedral (which still exists) is a fine structure: I could not express the feelings of awe and admiration the first view of

the interior created. The lofty Gothic aisles, rich with the finest decorations of exquisite work, the splendid and luminous brilliancy of the painted glass, the noble and elegant proportions of the building, present a combination of such beautiful objects, that, to my taste, I have never seen surpassed in any cathedral, either in England or France. Tours is still a handsome city, and it is to be lamented, that it has suffered so severely by the Revolution. A fine Gothic church, shattered during that period, is now converted into a stable, for the horses of the diligence; and many other public buildings appear in the same dilapidated state.

The country, in the vicinity of Tours, affords the most delightful walks. How much pleasure would it give me, at some future period, to pass a few months with you in this charming place! a wish that I trust may be realised. High and rocky declivities skirt the banks of the Loire; various dwellings for the poor are cut in these precipices, and rise one above another, to the very summit of the rocks. These little excavated habitations extend, for many miles, along the margin of the river, and are frequently encanopied by the vine, the laurel, or flowering plants, or now and then intermixed with white stone terraces and chateaux. The vine that flourishes in this province with the greatest luxuriance, is often seen overhanging the declivity of some romantic steep, or twining picturesquely around the windows of a chateau, forming a gay, vivid, and beautiful contrast to the dark sober hues, and the brown or tawny masses of the projecting rock. Several little islands rise amidst the clear waters of the Loire, covered with the lime, the poplar, and a variety of trees or shrubs, whose waving branches are repeated in the quivering reflections of the stream that passes rapidly on its course. Vineyards, yellow with the rich colours of autumnal beauty, extend along the hills and

distant landscape, or sometimes hang pendant in graceful festoons about the orchard trees, laden with their produce. Fine woods and green pastures alternately vary and enliven the scene, through which the Loire serpentines for many miles, till it fades into a long and uncertain line, which appears lost in the distance. Now and then a white sail is seen gliding silently along the rapid current, and sometimes catching a gleam of the retiring sun, that breaks through clouds, warm with the glow of evening. Such a scene, of tranquil and varied harmony, so clothed in all the sober livery of autumn, charms the eye with more than transient pleasure, and conveys to the mind, that calm and elevated feeling which subdues the importunate anxieties of life.

In the vicinity of Tours, stands the ruin of the abbey of Marmoutier, which was dilapidated by the Revolutionists. In this monastery, it is said, there is the finest stair-case in France, which escaped the general destruction.

We continued our journey towards Orleans, and left Tours at five in the afternoon; — the whole town, and the adjacent country, being at the time so completely covered by a thick fog, that for many miles scarcely the nearest objects were visible. We passed Amboise, which is situated on the opposite side the river. A fine castle appears upon the rock, above the town. After travelling some miles from Tours, the banks of the Loire lose their beauty. We no longer see the romantic excavated rock, or the gracefully pendant vine.

Orleans is a large and extensive city, containing many interesting vestiges of antiquity, several strong towers, and ruined walls. The cathedral is an exceedingly beautiful Gothic building, remarkably rich and elegant in its external ornaments. The ancient statues of Charles and Joan of Arc, which were formerly seen upon the bridge, no longer appear, and have been

most probably destroyed. A figure, representing Joan in armour, executed in a bad style by a modern French artist, has lately been erected in the market-place.

We alighted at our hotel at five o'clock in the morning, and entering the large court-yard, to proceed into the house, we were not a little surprised by observing several French officers, magnificently dressed in the military costume, seated upon the stone posts near the entrance, whilst they were undergoing the operation of shaving by the regimental barbers, in view of every person who went along. French officers are generally poor, with a large share of military pride. They are allowed many advantages, which is intended as a help to their scanty pay: for instance, they are admitted into all places of public amusement at half-price, and dine at an hotel on the same terms. One of these gentlemen greatly amused us this morning. He breakfasted, at five o'clock, in the room where we were sitting. Some of his companions continued smoking in the adjoining chamber. The officer took his seat at the table, before a dish of hot meat, with a large Newfoundland dog by his side. After fillipping off the cork of the bottle with his finger and thumb, — an action that displayed the vast number of mock diamond rings that adorned his hand, he filled out some wine, and drinking to his dog, tossed it off very cheerfully. He then carefully sopped up the gravy in the dish with a piece of bread, which he offered to the dog, who, having first rubbed it with his nose, then licked it, at last turned away his head, when the delicious morsel was immediately swallowed up by his master, who finished his breakfast with a most satisfied air. The repast ended, he drew his chair near ours, and, in courteous terms,

entered into familiar conversation with all the easy and polite gaiety of a Frenchman; and took especial care to exhibit in his discourse his perfect knowledge of horses and dogs, which he seemed to consider the most acceptable conversation he could possibly address to render himself agreeable to an Englishman. We soon wished him good morning, and proceeded to ramble about the town, and examine the vestiges of the ruined walls, that claim some interest from their local connection with the celebrated events which have distinguished Orleans. The walls are the most perfect on that side the town farthest from the river, and some of the antient gateways are also in the same state of preservation, and well worth the attention of the curious.

Joan, the heroic maid, is still remembered and spoken of in this town with the praise and veneration she so justly deserves from the French. Joan, clothed in steel, and mounted upon a beautiful charger, quitted Chinon, to proceed to the relief of Orleans, at that time besieged by the English. She waved her consecrated banner in the air, and turning towards the troops who were to bear her company, exclaimed, in a loud voice, — "To Orleans! Follow to Orleans! To victory!" The soldiers echoed her cry, — "Follow to Orleans! Follow the inspired maid of God." The loud blasts of the trumpet, and the clang of arms, gave the signal for the onset. Joan once more addressed her troops, and promised them success. Hope and confidence attended her steps. In the first exploit the maid achieved, she gave a striking proof of her valour, by defeating the party of English who attempted to oppose her entry into Orleans. The citizens received her and her retinue with acclamations of joy. This retinue was composed of many of the most noble and gallant

knights who fought in the army of Charles. These she summoned to attend her the next morning, together with the principal citizens of Orleans. When they were assembled in the great hall, the holy maid appeared before them, clad in complete armour, and bearing an unsheathed sword. She then invited the nobles and chief captains to follow her, saying, she knew it was pre-ordained that she was to conquer the English in the sally of that day.

She then commanded her party to attack the strong tower of St. Loup, which was defended by five hundred men. Joan led the onset, and, by her active courage and confident expressions, infused such a spirit of daring amongst the soldiers, that they seemed capable of any achievement. The tower was taken, and all within slain or made captive. The following morning a similar exploit was achieved by Joan. On the third day she ordered the tower at the end of the bridge to be attacked, where the flower of the English troops were assembled. They held out valiantly, but all proved vain. It was useless to resist a courage and a prudence that seemed as if indeed inspired by a supernatural power. During these attacks, the English lost nearly eight thousand men, and the French not more than one hundred and fifty troops. The French forces were daily augmented by persons who gained admission within the walls; for the bravest and most accomplished knights were proud to fight under the banner of the holy maid, and eagerly offered their service to aid her cause. So great was the fame of this youthful and female soldier, that scarcely any other commander was spoken of throughout France. The enthusiasm inspired by her prophetic ejaculations, and the report of her divine mission,

spread far and wide; and it is even said, that on some occasion a party of the English, who for a considerable time had been aiming to destroy her, without their shafts effecting a single wound, at length desisted, believing she was not capable of harm.

LETTER XXXI.

My dear ——, Boulogne.

I devote this evening to you, as it is the last opportunity I shall have of writing, previous to our meeting once more in England; you will receive this with a parcel from Dover, as we quit Boulogne to-morrow morning for that port. I should have written from Paris, during the short time we remained there; but excessive fatigue, and the occupation of each day in gratifying our curiosity, denied me any leisure for such employment. We were heartily glad to leave that gay city, miserable as it is at this season of the year. Paris must be intolerably dirty in the depth of winter. We quitted it in the diligence, at five o'clock in the morning, for Amiens, where we determined to remain a day, in order to view the fine cathedral, &c.

Amongst our companions, during the journey, was an intelligent French officer, who had served under the great Napoleon for many years, until he finished his career at Waterloo. The accounts this gentleman gave us of different campaigns in which he had been engaged, were extremely interesting, and apparently both impartial and correct. His descriptions of the sufferings of the French army in Russia were indeed dreadful. He told us that the troops frequently fell dead from off their horses, and that many who halted but for repose, became so benumbed in their limbs, that they were unable to move, and were frozen to death upon the spot. His own life, he considered, had been preserved

a madman, swearing he would not submit to such imposition. The astonished landlord averred it was nothing more than the usual charge, when the incensed traveller threw the bill in his face, immediately upon examining it, the landlord stept up to the Frenchman and softly whispered something in his ear, but not so softly, but that an English gentleman made out the import, which declared that the Garçon in mistake had given the Frenchman, a bill intended for a Monsieur Anglais. The Englishman insisted upon an explanation of the circumstance, to satisfy his suspicions, when it appeared that the bills presented to the English charged eighteen francs per head for the dinner, and those given to the French but five francs each person for the same fare.

When we came into Amiens at midnight, I was so cold and fatigued, that I hastened into my room, while Mr. S—— was arranging with the *conducteur* about our luggage: on his return into the inn, he found the poor English lady in tears, surrounded by half a dozen French lacqueys who were rudely playing off their wit by tormenting her; one pulled her one way, another turned her by the shoulders towards the door, while a third made an effort to drag her to the fire. He soon put an end to her perplexities, but not before they had almost frightened her into an hysteric fit. She, sobbing, told him that she had made signs for some refreshment, which the rogues had answered only by pretending not to comprehend her, and by pulling her so unmercifully about. We did our best to console her, and remained with her till she got into the diligence; when she assured us, her resolution was fixed not to get out of it again till the next night when it should arrive at Lisle.

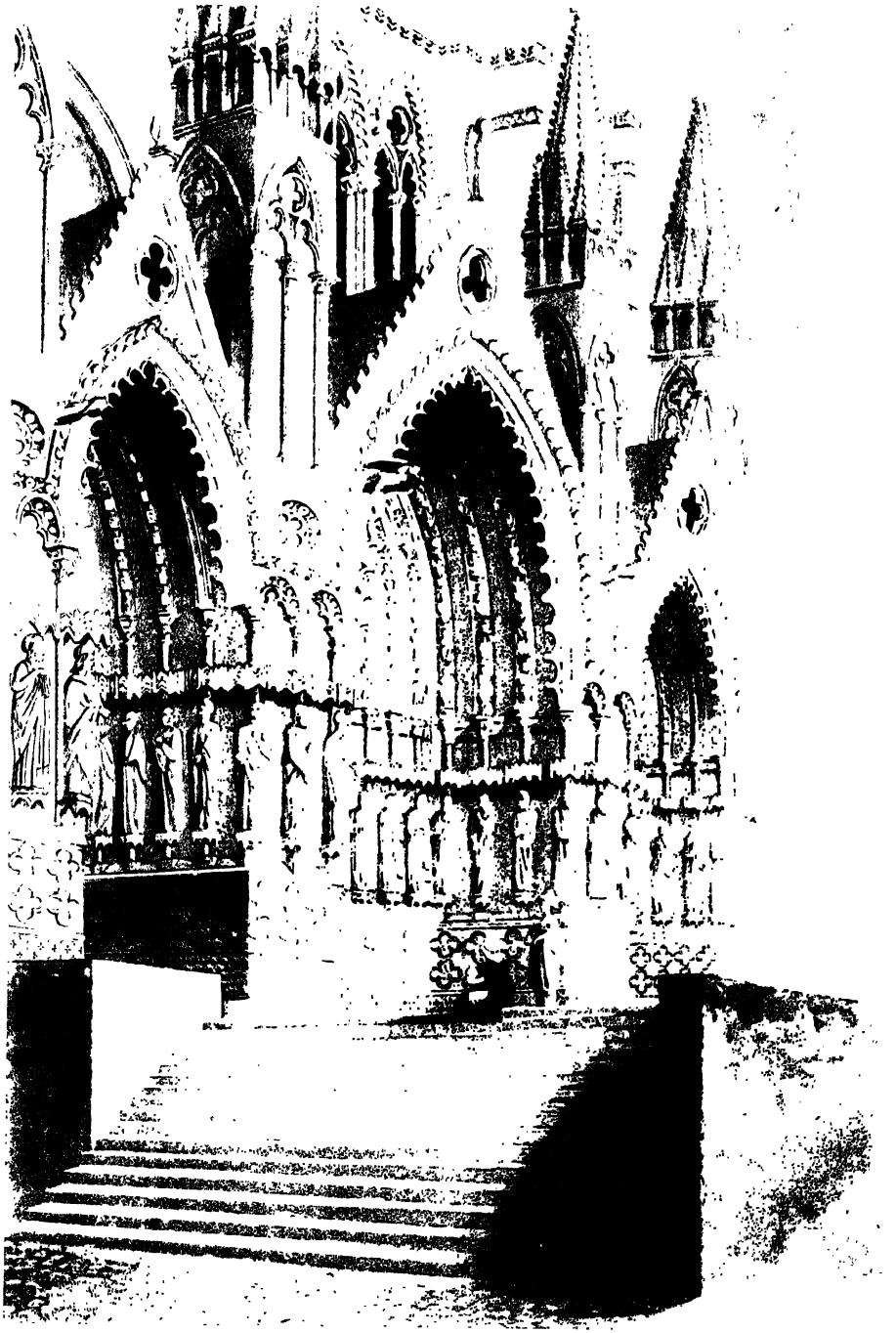
The following Sunday morning we attended high mass at the

cathedral, the most splendid and impressive ceremony I have ever yet seen performed in any Roman catholic assembly in France, and far exceeding in magnificence the mass of Notre Dame at Paris. The cathedral of Amiens, is, perhaps, the finest Gothic structure in France. To describe the grandeur, solemnity, and beauty of such an edifice is impossible: we spent the whole morning in viewing it, and walked over the leads upon the roof, notwithstanding the violent rain. The exterior of the building is covered with rich and beautiful Gothic ornaments and carvings, with a great number of figures of a colossal size. The interior, from the pavement to the roof, is one hundred and thirty feet in height, every part of the church being constructed on the same grand scale of proportion, this may, perhaps, give you some idea what a magnificent pile the whole combination forms. The nave of the church is 213 feet in length; the windows are large and numerous, with several circular, or, as they are called, wheel windows, all filled with the most brilliant diversity of painted glass. The choir is divided from the side-aisles, by richly-carved and deeply perforated screens, containing subjects from the life of John the Baptist. The figures represented are nearly the size of life, and entirely relieved from each other; the whole of these subjects are painted and gilt.

We saw in this cathedral, a withered head, covered by a glass set in silver, it is esteemed by good Catholics, and devout believers in the sanctity of rotten teeth and old bones, one of the most precious relics in France, as it is said to be the identical head of John the Baptist himself. This head was found at the taking of Constantinople in 1204, and presented to the church of Amiens. If the scull could speak, it is not unlikely

that it would declare its having once surmounted the shoulders of some Greek; but be that as it may, it is quite old and withered enough to make a very good Catholic relic, by no means unproductive to the church, as you pay something for looking at it. The priest, who exhibited St. John's head to us, did me the singular favour of offering permission that I might kiss the glass that covered it. Upon my declining the honour, he shook his head, and looked at me with an air of great pity; but this was not the first time I have had similar permissions. In some church in Britanny a priest once showed me a dirty scrap of dowlas, with an assurance that it was a part of the Virgin Mary's shift, and begged me to kiss it for my soul's sake.

This noble building happily escaped destruction during the Revolution, by being designated as a temple for the goddess of reason. The plan of Amiens cathedral was designed by a celebrated architect named Robert Lusarches: the first stone was laid A. D. 1220, by Bishop Evrard, in the reign of Philip Augustus. The church was finished in the year 1288, but the great portal was not completed till the end of the 13th century. On the 15th of August 1504, at the Assumption of the Virgin, the edifice was dedicated to our Lady, La Sainte Vierge. The great portal is composed of three door-ways, constructed beneath deep vaulted arches, richly ornamented with the finest Gothic carvings. The centre-door is called that of our Saviour, the entrance to the right, that of the Mother of God, and to the left, the gate of St. Firmin the Martyr. Above the first, our Saviour is represented in the attitude of bestowing the benediction, surrounded by the twelve apostles, and trampling Sin, in the figures of a lion and a serpent, under his feet. The



Virgin appears above the second entrance, also trampling upon a serpent; several subjects are likewise carved from the Bible, representing the creation of the world, our first parents, and various histories from the New Testament. Above the third gate is seen the statue of St. Tirmin. Upon the front elevation appear fourteen colossal statues of holy bishops, and the figures of St. Domice and St. Denis: this last saint, as well as St. Tirmin, is represented carrying his head in his hands. On the whole, this portal is probably the finest in Europe. The façade of the cathedral is composed of three exterior galleries, which extend along the front of the building: between the two first are placed, within niches, separated by columns richly ornamented, twenty-two colossal statues, said to be the figures of as many kings of France, and that Charlemagne is distinguished amongst them by bearing a globe. Upon the point of the arch, intermediate of the great portal, appears St. Michael, armed with a sword and buckler, destroying the angel of darkness.

Upon entering this magnificent cathedral, we perceived the two brazen tombs of the bishops Evrard and Godfrey, the founders of the church; these monuments were originally placed in the nave of the building, but they were removed in 1762, to their present situation, where they are continually exposed to injury from the beggars, who take their seats upon them to solicit alms. The view of the interior of Amiens cathedral excites no less our astonishment than admiration; so magnificently imposing is the combination it presents.

Cæsar made Amiens the centre of his operations against the Belgians; the city in his time bore the name of Samarobrive. There exists to this day the remains of a Roman encampment,

about three miles from Amiens near the Somme. Sully gives an account of the siege carried on by Henry the Fourth, of Navarre, to regain Amiens from the Spaniards, who had taken possession of the city.

We continued our journey yesterday morning, in company with a French doctor, who was going for the first time to visit England, a French lady, an Irish officer, and an Irish priest. In the cabriolet of the diligence were two young men, assuming the character of fashionable travellers to Paris, but whose accent and rustic manners, together with several pertinent remarks upon sheep, corn, and hay, betrayed their belonging to the respectable order of Kentish farmers. All the company, excepting ourselves, had taken their places for Calais.

The French doctor had formed his ideas of English people from the ludicrous account Pillet, a countryman of his, lately published relative to England; and I verily believe he expects to find all the women drinking brandy till they cannot see each other after dinner, and all the men murdering their wives whenever they wish to get rid of them; and the poor eating up the first colt they can catch, as a means of food, the same as the very authentic traveller just mentioned declares the French prisoners did Lord Cawdor's horse and saddle, while that nobleman was talking to the poor creatures in the prison. The Irish priest was a man of considerable talent, and, although a follower of the church of Rome, spoke with a liberality of sentiment very uncommon in persons of his persuasion, to which he united the lively manners and peculiar humour of his country. The officer, a fine gentleman, "spoke small, like a woman," with so many delicate airs, that he seemed as if he could not breathe the common air of all those vulgar wretches,

who had the misfortune of being born below the atmosphere of fashionable life. To exhibit his own personal dignities and relative importance, he now and then favoured us with some accounts of the successful smugglings of his friends, the Duchess of such-an-one, or the Countess, his aunt. These names and recitals greatly exalted him in the eyes of the French lady; add to which, he was by far the best dressed person in the diligence; she turned upon him, therefore, the whole battery of Parisian gallantry and charms.

The farmers determined to enjoy French Burgundy as long as they could, duty free, and amused themselves, during the journey, with emptying a store of bottles (with which they had providently stocked a basket) in most potent libations to Bacchus. We dined at Abbeville; when crossing the water for England became the subject of conversation, we mentioned our intention of going by Boulogne, to avoid Calais, where the English troops were embarking on their return from France. The priest suggested, in order that we should not part company, that all the party (as the full fare had been paid to Calais) should join us in crossing by Boulogne, and to this they willingly assented. The Kentish farmers very civilly begged, as I was the only English lady present, that I would be good enough to tell them what *smuggled goods* were allowed to pass the custom-house,—an ordeal that appeared to them supported by and terrible in all the strong arm of the law, for they had most plentiful stores of silk stockings, handkerchiefs, gloves, and perfumes: the stockings, they thought, might be passed by wearing half a dozen pair each, and stuffing the rest into their cravats; the gloves might be got rid of underneath the ham and butter in the basket, while the handkerchiefs would tie round their heads and necks; but, what to do

with the perfumes, was a question of doubtful import. The Irish officer winked at the company, as a signal for turning them out for a quiz; and advancing with a sort of dancing step towards the tall Kentish man, who looked as if he could eat up a dozen such flies at a meal,—"My dear sir," said he, "if I might advise, such perplexities will be easily set aside; for you had better even bestow the perfumes upon your hair, for certainly those brutes the custom-house officers have no respect for gentlemen, but will seize and incarcerate every bottle of your odoriferous scents." "That's very good advice," said the priest; "for you'll smell of your travels for six months to come." The officer smiled complacently, and the man of Kent stared, but determined, if no other way remained, the perfumes had better be so disposed of than fall into the rapacious hands of an officer of the customs. This grave affair thus happily settled, we travelled on pleasantly enough, for the whole party seemed in perfect satisfaction with themselves, and consequently with their neighbours. At midnight we stopt at Montreuil for supper. The conducteur of the diligence, as is usual in France, sat down at the same table with the company, who paid for his fare, and treated him most liberally with wine. The Irish officer, who spoke French with the same precise measurement that a haberdasher serves out a yard of ribband or a pennyworth of pins, to exhibit the *amiable*, acted a great condescension towards Monsieur le Conducteur, and insisted he should sit next to him at table. The repast ended, the English travellers were leaving the room, when the word "*Arrêtez!*" ejaculated by the French lady, made them stop till she, the Doctor, and the conducteur, had stuffed their pockets with all the portable provisions that remained upon the table. We once more got into the diligence; the Irish priest soon talked himself fast asleep,

and most of the company put on their night-caps and followed his example. When we stopt at Boulogne, about five o'clock this morning, we were suddenly aroused by a violent altercation between the conducteur and the Kentish beaux, which grew so loud, that it awakened the whole party. The priest, half asleep, popped his head out of the window, and asked the conducteur what was the matter: "*C'est Monsieur* God-dam * *qui veut son passport*," replied the Frenchman. We now ascertained, that the Kentish men had declared their intention to stop at Boulogne; and the conducteur refusing to give up their luggage, or their passports (which he held in his own possession), insisted they should go on to Calais, where their places had been booked. The farmers soon forgot all Parisian foppery, and, doubling their fists, threatened to give Monsieur a taste of English boxing, till he silenced them by declaring, if they chose to stop at Boulogne they might, but that he would carry their trunks and passports on to Calais.—"Those brutal rustics," said the officer, "cannot do things in a gentlemanly way." The priest then interfered to make peace, begging there might be no fighting amongst friends; and assuring the gentlemen that the conducteur was too fond of them to let them go so easily, and that the devil would always let a Frenchman have his own way, whenever he played the tyrant in great or small life. We quitted the party, leaving them still in wrath; the conducteur insolently triumphing in having gained his point, and the Kentish men swearing, in plain English, what a sound drubbing they would have given the fellow, if he had not unluckily held their passports.

* The term of Monsieur *God-dam*, as a favourite expression of contumely with the French towards the English, will be familiar in the remembrance of the English traveller in France.

LETTER XXXII.

Dover, November 13th, 1818.

Thank God, my dear mother, we are once more safely arrived in England. I shall dispatch my parcel for you to-night, and to-morrow morning we go to Canterbury; the day after I hope for the happiness of meeting you all in good health. We should have quitted Dover this evening, but the custom-house officers detain us here, our trunks not having yet passed the ordeal of their merciless hands: this will occasion a tiresome delay, for I am impatient till I once more meet my dearest parents.

We left Boulogne this morning, in a vessel that was hired to convey an East Indian lady and her numerous retinue to Dover. It was lucky the captain took us on board; for we came down too late to embark in the regular packet, which was already under full sail, out at sea. And who think you this East-Indian should be, but your old acquaintance Mrs. P——: as I had not seen her since my infancy, and she appeared so strange a mixture of an eastern queen and a French coquette, I felt no sort of inclination to renew the acquaintance.

The passage from Boulogne to Dover proved exceedingly rough and disagreeable. We remained on deck, to avoid the sick party below. Mrs. P—— soon lost all her fine airs, and looked as sorry a compound of mortality, as the meanest of her domestics. I could not choose but admire the gallantry and attention evinced towards the invalids, by a Frenchman, who was steward on board the vessel.

We had no sooner got within sight of the bold and projecting white cliffs of Dover, than the pilot declared, that, in consequence of the sea running so high, he could not take us over the bar into the harbour, and that we must wait till a boat came off to carry the passengers on shore. The annunciation of being near land aroused the whole party, who, in spite of illness, crawled with tottering steps upon the deck, in order to distribute amongst the female servants, the trinkets and French shawls that belonged to their mistress, who appeared in absolute consternation, at the terrific idea of the custom-house officers. Her countenance, already livid from illness, turned yet more pallid with apprehension; and her distress was considerably augmented, when the boat came along-side to take us all a-shore. The waves ran so high, that at one moment it was dashed up against the vessel, and the next carried away from it by the force of the waters. Poor Mrs. P——'s whole attention seemed painfully divided between her anxiety lest her child should be tumbled overboard in getting into the boat, or lest her fine French rings should be seized by the officers. She alternately called out to the sailors to take care of her child, — and the next minute inquired something about the officers, and then immediately turned towards the palm of her hand the brilliants of her rings, lest they should attract observation,—again calling out to take care of the infant. Her complicated distress, and excessive anxiety about both her rings and her child, appeared so great, that I was doubtful whether the seizure of the former would not have given her as much pain as the drowning of the latter. We got, however, safely into Dover, where I am truly rejoiced at again meeting so many English faces, and am absolutely barbarous enough to receive more enjoyment from the pleasing comfort of a neat English inn, and a good warm

coal fire, than from half the fine sights in France, during our long absence from home. I have seen much to interest the observer, both of art, character, and national peculiarity; and I return with a sincere and augmented love of my own country, the real value of which is best appreciated by a residence abroad. France is very well, to be visited; but this is the country to live in. I cannot describe the delight I feel in being once more in my own land, and from henceforth I will set it down in my prayers, to thank God that I was born in England. Adieu! in a short time we shall meet: I have many things to tell you, that I trust will afford you some amusement in their relation; but none will be half so earnestly expressed, as the assurance that I am, my dear mother, ever most affectionately Yours,

A. E. S.

THE END.

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